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Viewing Political Selves in Film: A Comparative Reception Study of Cuban Films in Cuba and the United States

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Viewing Political Selves in Film: A Comparative Reception Study of Cuban Films in Cuba and the United States

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The author analyzed political viewing of five Cuban films in Cuba by official cultural writers and compared this to the viewing of the same set of films by critics, essayists, and film commentators in the United States. The analysis used Janet Staiger's film reception theory, the work of Michel Foucault on technologies of self, and Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on cultural fields and *habitus* as theoretical frameworks. Each set of

evidence was analyzed in relation to the types of political identities available at the time in each country within cultural institutions, and then each set was compared with the other. In Cuba, official workers, responding to the Cuban government's need for cultural policies, crafted an interpretive apparatus based in debates that explored the relationship between aesthetics and politics. The interpretive apparatus, which the author termed "revolutionary hermeneutics," became a preferred rationale for interpretation and cultural evaluation, a discipline, that shaped the Cuban cultural field from 1958 to 1985, the period the author studied, and that cultural workers used to interpret and value *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968, d. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea), *Lucia* (1968, d. Humberto Solás), *One Way or Another* (1974, d. Sara Gómez), *Portrait of Teresa* (1979, d. Pastor Vega), and *Up to a Certain Point* (1983, d. Alea). U.S. critics, influenced by the political changes of the 1960s, which made common feminist and leftist ideas about culture and the politicization of all things Cuban, interpreted and valued the same Cuban films with hermeneutic tactics that included anti-totalitarianism, feminism, auteurism, and Marxism. The range of these tactics failed to show the disciplining of the Cuban revolutionary hermeneutics but did provide evidence of the complex ways in which cultural interpretation served U.S. cultural workers in their negotiations of the cultural field's relation to economic and political structures (the field of power). As in the Cuban case, the relationship between the cultural field and the field of power shaped the critics' understanding of the Cuban films.

Contents

1

Introduction to the Project

Until 1971, general audiences from the United States of America were denied the opportunity to see revolutionary Cuban cinema.[1] The first opportunity came when the non-profit radical film organization American Documentary Films (ADF) joined efforts with the Cuban Film Institute (Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos, ICAIC) to organize a Festival of Cuban Films in several United States cities, with an opening festival in New York City. After reaching agreements that included inviting the Cuban directors Alfredo Guevara, Santiago Alvarez, Jorge Fraga, and Saúl Yelin to attend the Festival, ADF went ahead and started to promote the Festival and its special guests.

The venue for the Festival was the Olympia Theater in New York City where, from March 24 to April 2, 1972, seven feature films and fifteen documentaries, all of which had received international prizes and acclaim, would be exhibited for the first time in the United States. The event was noteworthy not only because it marked the debut of Cuban film in U.S. theaters, but also because it signaled a potential shift in the, until then, strained (or some may say non-existent) cultural relations between Cuba and the United States. According to the film critic of *The New York Times*, "the Festival promised to be 'the most important film retrospective of the year'" (27). Instead, it became the stage for the display of deeply anti-Cuban sentiments by social, political,

and governmental forces. The Cuban filmmakers were denied visas; the Olympia Theatre was stoned and threatened with bombs; and during the exhibit of the first and only film that was eventually shown (*Lucía*, 1968, d. Humberto Solás), anti-Castro agents released white mice, interrupting the event and marking it with a sense of mockery. The next day newspapers gave more importance to the disturbances caused by the mice than to the fact that ambassadors from twenty-two nations attended the festival (32).

This story is intended to draw attention to several issues about the study of film in general and Cuban film in Cuba and in the United States in particular. Some are worth highlighting: film acquires social and political relevance and significance not solely because of the "filmic text," but also, and in some cases more importantly, because of the particular form in which it is produced, distributed, and viewed. Moreover, film acquires significance because of its place of origin and the profoundly complex socio-political-cultural backgrounds of the viewers.[2] As was evident in the above example, those attending the film showing and those who disrupted it had strong political identities, and, one may hypothesize, they attended the Olympia Theater not simply to watch a film but as a way of enacting, or socially performing, these political identities. Such public performances of political affiliations are contextualized in history, for instance in the following issues: the political animosity between the two nations; the ability of the United States government to apply censorship; the political influence and impotence of the ADF illustrated respectively by the fact that twenty-two ambassadors

attended the showing of *Lucía* yet the ADF could not convince the American government to grant visas to the filmmakers; and the power of the media to shape the meanings of the filmic event—newspapers concentrated in the mice released during the showing of *Lucía*—and thus the filmic text.

Goals and Objectives of the Project

In this project I am interested in how political identities are expressed and enacted through film reception.[3] To this goal, I study two related case studies and compare them. First, I examine the reception of post-revolutionary Cuban film in Cuba by official reviewers and cultural essayists in Cuba working for official cultural institutions such as Casa de las Américas and ICAIC.[4] Second, I investigate the critical reception of the same post-revolutionary Cuban films in the United States, centering on the writings of those working for liberal, leftist, and feminist media. The films around which the key arguments will be constructed are, in chronological order: *Memories of Underdevelopment* (*Memorias del Subdesarrollo,* 1968), directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Lucia* (*Lucía*, 1968) directed by Humberto Solás (both, *Memories* and *Lucia* were released in the United States in the early 1970s); *One Way or Another*, (*De Cierta Manera*, 1974) directed by Sara Gómez, *Portrait of Teresa* (*Retrato de Teresa,* 1979) directed by Pastor Vega; and *Up to a Certain Point* (*Hasta Cierto Punto*, 1983) also directed by Gutiérrez (these films were shown in the United States at the end of the 1970s and during the first half of the 1980s).[5]

As it can be inferred based on the limited set of reviews and writings that I will use as evidence, this study is not meant to cover reception in Cuba in general or reception of Cuban film in the United States in general. I am only interested in writing about more specific issues regarding political identities and how these are constituted through the process of film reception, placing great emphasis on issues of interpretation. In the Cuban case, I will give special emphasis to the way socio-cultural contexts mediated the formation of contingent political identities and how these identities were crafted, or not, around issues of hermeneutics and cultural consumption. For this case, I will explore the cultural milieu using historical evidence. Within the cultural realm, I will give special attention to the way cultural policies since 1959 defined art and film as educational and the cultural worker as part of the political vanguard. I will argue that official institutions and workers understood their civic roles in relation to specific aesthetic principles. Debates over aesthetics thus helped workers define their political identities by providing the basis for action. With aesthetics, cultural workers evaluated and interpreted filmic and other cultural texts. Moreover, cultural policies and aesthetic and hermeneutic principles relied on non-liberal ideas of self-hood and embracing these also became part of being a cultural worker with an official political identity.

In the American case, I underline the relationship between hermeneutics and politics and examine how the reception of politicized films manifested this relationship. To achieve this, I will provide a historical context to the exhibition of the films by looking at foreign film distribution and the politicization of U.S. culture due to the

impact of the 1960s. More importantly, I will argue that feminist and leftist political identities heavily relied on critiques of culture; thus, these ways of being political developed interpretive techniques which I expect to find manifested in the way the Cuban films were interpreted. Finally, I will investigate normative ideas of selfhood implicit in U.S. hermeneutic tactics.

Each case represents an opportunity to investigate politicized interpretation because these films were reviewed by highly politicized official audiences in Cuba, where the revolution politicized most public life, and in the United States, where, as illustrated by the example, the films were distributed amidst political confrontation and where the critics' aesthetic expectations were often mixed with political expectations. It is important however to remark that both national and historical settings are extremely different. Cuba, since its revolution in 1959, has been a nation (re)built around the idea that each participant must shape its social self in order to become a revolutionary, a proper citizen. This expectation was particularly common amidst cultural workers (such as film critics) who were often perceived as the cultural vanguard of the island (see Chapters 3 and 4). Therefore, understanding writings on film as an expression of the writer's political identity is a relatively straight forward matter. In the United States, the 1970s and 1980s, which are the decades at which I look, have a relatively diffused system of politics in which it is harder to pinpoint with accuracy what action is an expression of what identity. Though the social transformation of the 1960s required from radicals that the personal needed to become politicized, the "defeat" of the

counter-culture and of the Movement gave way to a system of politics where feminisms, leftisms, identity politics, and citizen's movements grew increasingly common and complexly overlapping. It follows that my claims regarding the United States will be quite different from my claims regarding the Cuban context.

That said, and as I will show, my interest is not simply to prove that film interpretation is a way of enacting political dispositions. Such a perspective is obvious to many.[6] What I am interested in tracing is the specific and contingent ways in which film interpretations are evidence of the political identity of individuals, including the ways of publicly performing these identities through their writings. I believe that the relationship between film interpretations and political identities is mutually constitutive, and thus I ask: how do normative ideas about political identities influence the construction of modalities of reception and interpretive techniques? And, vice versa, how do normative ideas about interpretation and aesthetics help constitute political identities? In a preliminary fashion I suggest that one way of addressing the previous questions is by looking at the introductory example and recognizing that the hermeneutical life of those viewers, including the organizers of the festival, was shaped in social contexts where self-formation was important.[7] Because of this, interpreting *Lucia* was both an exercise of modalities of reception socially established and an exercise of the viewers' political and ethical lives in their striving to be or become proper political subjects.

Theoretical and Methodological Contexts

Before I continue discussing theory and methodology in the following chapter, I need to clarify where the research originated and some of my most basic theoretical and methodological approaches. The latter include film reception theory, technologies of self, and the ethics of interpretation.

Although centered on film reception, the topic of this dissertation originated from questions of identity: it came about when I observed that those writing about leftism, Marxism, and/or feminism sometimes engaged in prolonged definitions and debates regarding what personal characteristics constituted, or should constitute, a good feminist and/or a good leftist. One can read Herbert Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* as a contribution on these debates within the left and Catherine A. MacKinnon's *Feminism Unmodified* as contributing to a feminist discussion in identity.[8] Having read some of the literature on Cuban film and culture as well as Marxist aesthetics and French and United States feminism, I wondered whether these attempts to construct normative identities in what I consider progressive communities included prescriptions on film interpretation. If so, and because I define myself as a leftist and feminist scholar, I became interested in finding and using theoretical and methodological frameworks that could account both for these communities' normative tendencies and still allow me to talk about them in progressive terms. This includes looking at (least some) film reception as dual, as progressive and normative, as evidence of subjection and of

contingent freedom. The reader should thus keep in mind that my decisions regarding the selection of theories and methods has been partly influenced by this.

It is necessary to remark that scholarship in media reception is quite varied, and it includes quantitative and qualitative studies. Of particular significance to my research (because of theoretical issues) are ethnographic approaches dealing with literature (Janice Radway's studies on romance novels and readers) and television (Ien Ang's study on *Dallas*; Julie D'Acci's studies on *Cagney and Lacey*).[9] However, given that I investigate film, that my studies are historical (roughly spanning from 1960 to 1985), and that most of my evidence will be archival, I will use a historiographical approach called "film reception theory."

This is an approach to cinema formalized in the 1990s as a reaction to overtly textual approaches to film theory. [10] My goal is to elaborate on film reception theory, particularly ideas developed by Janet Staiger,[11] by proposing specific ways to account for hermeneutic strategies of historical politicized viewers. To this effect, I use the work of Michel Foucault on technologies of the self and ethics and propose the incorporation of some of his concepts to film reception theory and methodology.

In *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema,* Staiger undertakes the mission of producing a theory of film reception. Her general goal is to set the basis for a materialist historiography that stresses "contextual factors rather than textual materials or reader psychologies."[12] While typical theories of reception within literature and film have tended to pay exclusive attention to either textual or

psychological factors surrounding the viewing/reading process, Staiger is interested in bringing both together by historicizing these aspects of film reception. For her, a historical materialist reception study must be able to assess the range of psychological reading strategies available to the spectator. Staiger's methodology is able to examine closely the intersection of personal histories, discursive formations, and their relation to the filmic text by conceiving the moment of reception as the convergence of key subjective (discursive formation, personal histories) and material elements (the filmic text, venues of reception, and epoch). All these points are necessary to a history of reception and to the elucidation of the moment of reception, the event that Staiger aims to illuminate (8).

Similarly, I am trying to elucidate the event of reception, but, in addition, I propose to look at how the individual's ethical and moral life determines the event of reception. Defining, or at least questioning, events of reception in the spectator's political life play as important of a role as delineating the "history of the interactions between real readers and texts" (8). It is my belief that a materialist history of reception may benefit from conceiving the moment of reception not only as the definition of an object that belongs to the historical transformation of film and of audience (the event of reception) but also as part of, in many instances, the process in which the spectator becomes a socio-ethical-political being. This aspect of reception is particularly relevant to studies focused on feminist, ethnic, postcolonial, gay and lesbian, and any other type of ideologically marginal communities (including white supremacy and extreme right)

since these social and cultural milieus may be partly constructed based on ideas of personal transformation, just as I suggest social revolutions are. Thus defining the technologies that produce at the level of the subject and at the level of the self the phenomenological and hermeneutical conditions of just such film reception events becomes an important complement to these studies.

But to be able to perform such investigations it is necessary to produce more elaborate accounts of the subject and the self since it is only by acknowledging the history and constitutions of subjects and selves that we can intuit the role events, such as film interpretation, may have for historical subjects. What I suggest is not a transformation of the basic precepts guiding contemporary reception theory, but rather I propose an addition: to the context of viewing, to the history of the material conditions of the event of viewing, to the history of the discourses that inform the event, to the set of viewing strategies available to a historical viewer, to the history of the filmic text and its incrustations, to the film's intertextual meanings, to the horizon of expectations of the viewer, I propose to add the history of the role film and film interpretation play in the way historical viewers constitute their selves. Because of the more localized cultural setting, bound, as I show in Chapter 3, by cultural policy, this last point will be more evident in the Cuban case. The U.S. case will serve, however, to highlight the specificity of the Cuban official reception.

My examination starts at the level of the self and of the subject. And since for Foucault crafting the self requires the implementation of specific technologies of self –

practices that "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality"[13]– and given the profoundly ethical and political connotations that Cuban film has had for Cuban and U.S. critics, it is worth exploring the role technologies of self (understood as a fundamental social-personal system for the constitution of political identities) may have played in the reception of Cuban film by Cuban and U.S. cultural critics. More centrally to reception theory, what kind of institutionalized film viewers would these technologies help constitute? And, how do we apply the hermeneutics implicit in Foucault's technologies of self to reception theory? Also, in a comparative note, how can we characterize the differences and similarities between the crafting of selves in these two small sets of critics and writers in Cuba and the United States? These questions are quite complex theoretically and methodologically, and it would be presumptuous to say that I will give definite answers to all of them; rather, my overall goal is more modest since I simply plan to advance the research regarding reception studies and political identities.

This dissertation will deal with two small sets of politicized viewers primarily in Cuba and to a lesser extent in the United States. Using historical evidence regarding political and cultural structures (including ideatic systems such as ideologies, epistemologies, and aesthetic theories) and film reviews, commentaries and essays, I will suggest that specific styles of being political were manifested and can be found in

the ways critics and cultural commentators used, interpreted, and/or created meaning for a small set of post-Revolutionary Cuban films. Looking at Cuban revolutionary cultural workers (a term I will be using in future chapters) and a small set of American liberal cultural workers as audiences and as citizens, my research will attempt to examine "subjecthood" and "selfhood" in relation to two types of historical subjects, the Cuban and the American, two types of individuals who through their daily activities, one of which is film viewing, assert and constitute two contingent styles of citizenship. These ways of being political often gave importance to the crafting of a new ethical self, and thus a new type of subjecthood. To craft meant to "work" in the production of the self, and the work was the application of hermeneutics of the self, and interpretive techniques. In Cuba, the new ethical self that I am referring to would be called the New Man;[14] in the United States it would have names like liberal, feminist, and leftist citizen.

Self, Subjects, and Individuals

Before I continue it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the terms "subject," "individual," and "self." With Paul Smith, I understand that "The 'individual' is that which is undivided and whole and understood to be the source and agent of conscious action or meaning which is consistent with it. The subject, however, is not self-contained, as it were, but is immediately cast into a conflict with forces that dominate it in some way or another—social formations, language, political apparatuses, and so on."[15] The subject is the determined; the individual is the determining.[16] To define the

self seems a more complex task, particularly if one tries to define it as something different and apart from the subject. In part, the difficulty stems from a confusion in usage within psychoanalytical theory (quite influential in the humanities) where, according to Smith, both the subject and the self have appeared as the unfulfilled-unconscious-structured illusion of plenitude.[17] In addition, and obstructing its use, the difficulty of defining the self appears to be the result of equating "self" to the "transcendental self" of the Enlightenment and ferociously rejecting it.

I propose the following working definition: The "self" is the psychic image the individual has of its own consistency as individual and as a subject. It is thus an intrinsic part of identity, of action, and of the history of the individual through time. Moreover, the culturally specific standard of consistency, or what it means to be an "individual" and a "self," produces expectations that, though depending on the subject's symbolic constitution and historical contingency, *often* (not always) appears as unfulfilled. This sentiment of "incompletion," which Toby Miller describes at length in *The Well Tempered Self*, fuels individual action which potentially transforms the subject.[18]

In the following sections I review, first, the way the film literature has theorized radical liberal selves as audiences in the United States, and, second, the way Cuban film literature has looked at revolutionary selves in Cuban audiences. A third, though brief, area reviewed is the way film reception studies has dealt with politicized identities. I end this chapter with an outline of the dissertation chapter by chapter.

Radical Selves in U.S. Film Theory

This section reviews film literature in the United States dealing with the formation of radical-liberal selves in their capacities as audiences. I do not attempt to review histories of radical liberalism nor theories of the formation of the self by other cultural practices such as education, consumption, or art. The former will be acknowledged and used as source material in later chapters in the dissertation. The latter will be formally or tangentially addressed in Chapter 2.

Dividing film reception in terms of the subject-as-viewer, the individual-as-viewer, and the self-as-viewer is unusual because the tradition of understanding the subject as determined, the self as delusion, and agency as non-existent has been hegemonic during the last decades (some exceptions in the cultural studies tradition are included at the end of this section).[19] Questions about the self (any self) in this tradition, often referred to as "*Screen* theory" or "apparatus theory," were of little relevance, given the secondary status the self was understood to play in determining the relation between individual and film. The self, like the subject, was the determined: structures (like filmic structures) were the determining. That said, film theory was, and is also, critical theory, and while the possibility of political emancipation was questioned each time that the subject was put at the center of the relation between film and viewer, investigating the forces (structures) that determined the subject was and is a way of producing or investigating a radical liberal self and is itself a political activity. Therefore, and as I will show, the way film theory evolved in the United States during

the last three decades relates to radical liberalism because it either elaborates on the impossibility of radicalism or because it substantiates the utopian potential of both everyday life and the individual.

The way film theory evolved during the 1970s is amply documented.[20] Suffice to say that influenced by psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan), Marxism (Louis Althusser), semiotics, and structuralism (Roland Barthes), film theory of the time questioned the notion of a transcendental ego by understanding the subject to be the product of a fragmentation between conscious and unconscious. These theories defined the subject as the product of language and continued the systematic attack on metaphysics that since the nineteenth century has made increasingly unnecessary discussions of the self within the humanities. Nonetheless, given the influence of Marxism in these discussions, the self, understood as an imaginary identity construction that allows the individual to see his/her actions as free, continued its presence in film theory, though mostly as the privileged position of the researcher. Arguably, the reason for this tendency is Althusser's idea of a Marxist science and philosophy as tools to study, and escape from, ideology.[21]

In this tradition, and illustrating the way subjects and selves are understood by *Screen* theorists, is the work of Christian Metz who, during the early 1970s, applied the principles of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and Saussurean linguistics to film. His work is full of nuances and can be characterized as a systematic attempt at understanding film as language. He develops ideas such as the *Grand Syntagmatique*, which he understands

as the grammar of film and a fundamental structure for meaning production,[22] and further elaborates on Jean-Louis Baudry's notion of the cinematic apparatus.[23] For Metz, the cinematic apparatus includes the technical, textual, and mental machinery that the spectator uses to produce meaning and that constitutes the spectator as a desiring subject.[24] With the notion of the apparatus, he attempts to explain the relation between the institution of film, ideology, and the spectator, and this explanation includes a seminal discussion on the self. In an influential essay titled "Story/Discourse: Notes on Two Kinds of Voyeurism,"[25] Metz tries to understand the workings of ideology in spectatorship and argues that Hollywood film (which Metz understood as generic, mainstream fictional, narrative cinema) presents itself as story (a term borrowed from Emile Benveniste to signify narration from an all-knowing but unseen intelligence) but is discourse (which refers to the act of telling and that implies the presence of an I (546-547).

This masquerading is possible because desire glues the subject to a voyeuristic stance in which pleasure depends on the distance of viewer from film. However, film is enunciation and discourse disguised as story and disguised not by the ideology of the text but by the institution of cinema, its history, and its ability to naturalize individual consumption of film and the private pleasure of voyeurism. The self, in this characterization, is prey to history, ideology, institutions, and the unconscious. But Metz provides a second characterization of self in the essay, and in this one the self

stands apart from the subject and subjection. In it, Metz takes the position of the film viewer and justifies the possibility of accounting for the process of viewing:

> How should I "set" my own position as subject, in order to describe these films?…I shall take a particular listening-post in myself (not of course, the only one), a post which will allow my "object," the standard-issue film, to emerge as fully as possible. In the cultural psychodrama of "positions" I shall adopt neither the role of the person who likes that kind of film nor the role of the person who does not like them. I shall let the words on these pages come from the person who likes to see these films in quotation marks… accepting the ambivalent coexistence of this anachronistic affection with the sadism of the connoisseur who wants to break open the toy and see into the guts of the machine (547).

What is striking about this passage is the certainty with which Metz defines, and hopes to occupy, a position from which film can be objectified and from which ideology can be seen as working yet harmlessly distant. His "science" is based in "connoisseurship" which is linked to the way he perceives his history (his training in film appreciation and criticism is validated by the present but depends on a coherent understanding of his education, his techniques of analysis, his sensibility), and, more importantly, it is based on Metz's desire "to break open the toy" which suggests projection about a future and an ethical stance towards the world. His science is his self.

But most people did not have science. They were subjects to ideology. *Screen*'s definitions of the subject supported and gave validity to the Marxian ideas of alienation implicit in Althusser's definition of ideology as "a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence."[26] How, after all, can subjects access their real conditions of existence? How, as Baudry queries, can we step outside Plato's cave and know the apparatus that subjects us?[27] Without the real, or

inside the cave, freedom is impossible.[28] Logical corollaries to this line of thinking included the following: a fragmented subject could never be present to itself (and thus fully cognate), could never know its real conditions of existence (and thus fully perceptual or reflexive), could never reach the sublime state of wholeness that pre-fragmented beings experienced (and thus truly joyful), could never then be held accountable to history (and thus truly free). At least theoretically, radicalism and freedom were impossible. Conversely and logically the self, understood as the unity that spoke the "I," was deemed illusory, false, and even dangerous, unless it carried the banner of Marxist science or philosophy. For some time it was quite unfashionable to talk about the self-as-viewer without making reference to its demonic Enlightenment-patriarchal-Capitalist-fascist roots. The dream of selfhood was an unethical dream, an ideological delusion, from which we had to wake. Researcher excluded, in regard to the individual and to the self, the illusion of unity could only be supported by ideology and patriarchy.

A clear and influential example in film theory is found in the work of Luce Irigaray. In criticizing psychoanalysis, Irigaray argues that Freud could only account for the male self:

> Freud discovers… the desire for the same, for the self-identical, for the self (as) same, and again of the similar, the alter ego and, to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the…auto…the homo...the male, dominates the representational economy…A man minus the possibility of (re)presenting oneself as a man = a normal woman.[29]

While language, self, and logos are masculine, the feminine is the unrepresentable, the repressed, and the unconscious. Thus, the feminine exists and can

disrupt patriarchal language and enunciation. For this to happen, feminine language would have to undo patriarchal language and subvert it, in disruptive excess, by blocking its smooth functioning with feminine pleasure, with unconscious language. For Irigaray, the self and its false unity mean patriarchy and domination.[30]

In apparatus theory, the process of analyzing film viewing became a matter of assessing the relation film had to the unconscious elements involved in spectatorship. Here, the subject-as-viewer relates to film in terms of the determinants that condition it and provide, unconsciously, the ideal setting for a transfer of ideology (often via the mechanics of desire) from the filmic text to the psyche. The cinematic apparatus lives internalized through culture and manipulates the perceptual, hermeneutic, and libidinal engagement of film viewer with film.

Not surprisingly these ideas gave way to a second wave of theory that proposed that, given the multiple historical, social, cultural, and political backgrounds of the subject-as-viewer and given the fact of its over-determination by race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation, the apparatus could not be monolithic: the subject is as plural as is the filmic text. Within a few years, and particularly during the late seventies and eighties, subjectivities turned into subject-positions (discontinuous textual spaces that produce multiple and fragmented addresses) and these opened up the process of viewing to progressive political agendas. The plurality of the subject and of the text set the bases for unlocking the viewing process and, theoretically, for giving room for negotiations, oppositions, resistances, ambivalences, and other counter-hegemonic

practices. Agency, albeit limited, became substantive in the formation of the individual-as-viewer. The critique of the subject of *Screen* theory became the foundation for the subject-positions that more radical selves occupied in film theory from the 1970s to the present.

Screen theory and subject-position theories addressed the formation of radical liberal selves in the United States but did it tangentially. *Screen* theory's concentration on issues of gender and sexuality meaningfully addressed political radicalism from the perspective of women, homosexuals, and lesbians, though almost only in their capacities as subjects-as-viewers. The sexualizing and gendering of film theory was the result of the influence of psychoanalysis, particularly the Lacanian version. According to this late appropriation of Freudian theory, the constitution and determination of the subject is the result of the mechanisms of desire activated in the Oedipal stage. Crucial to the relevance of desire for film theory is the idea that the break of plenitude immanent in the Oedipal complex simultaneously establishes signification (thus meaning), sex, gender, and sexuality differences (thus subjects and subject positions), and, according to Irigaray, a self (thus, albeit limited by the unconscious, an agent, and a knower). The coincidence of the constitution of these processes in the formation of the subject proved to be a fruitful area of analysis for feminist writers who then investigated the constitution of sex, gender, and sexuality by symbolic acts such as film spectatorship. For instance, Laura Mulvey investigated the act of interacting with the patriarchal symbolic system of classical Hollywood film in terms of the act's pleasure

for a male film viewer and proposed the following ideas: the gaze is patriarchal, thus establishing the relevance of the male self as the preferred film viewer; women are objects or subject to the gaze; and the gaze constitutes female subjectivity which establishes the irrelevance of the subjected female self.[31] Jackie Stacey, Mary Ann Doane, and Stephen Heath, among others, questioned the universal application of Mulvey's ideas for all film viewers and suggested instead redefining the act of film-viewing (spectatorship) as an act open to multiple sexed, gendered, and sexualized systems. [32] Such observations were necessary to establish the theoretical possibilities of female and lesbian spectatorship, female and lesbian filmic texts, and feminist cultural production. In addition, such observations opened the way to theorizing the male body as subject to both the heterosexual and homosexual gaze.[33]

The relevance of such research projects and theoretical elaborations continues, and one important thread partially defines contemporary understanding of the aesthetics of political radicalism in the United States in its feminist versions. I am referring here to the contributions by Annette Kuhn who, following Irigaray, suggests that instead of basing the idea of feminine film on biologisms, the feminine should refer to representation, to a subject position "that it poses a challenge to dominant forms of relations of texts and recipients."[34] Close to Irigaray and echoing Metz's idea of the self as the seed of critical viewing, Kuhn's representational subversive strategies explicitly acknowledge a film viewer (reader) capable of exceeding the text's suggested positions and producing, through conscious and unconscious actions, a space for "radical

signifying practice" (13). The particular aesthetics of such a text imply, in most cases, the assumption of a self, not only a subject, capable of finding a space for action and self-definition in its relation to the filmic text. According to Kuhn, and in line with some of the key arguments in this proposal, "A feminist text has no fixed formal characteristics, precisely because it is a relationship: it becomes a feminine text in the moment of its reading," which implies that it is more proper to talk about a feminist reading or reception than a feminist text. "If primacy is thus transferred from author and text to reading, then the moment of reception itself becomes a feasible point of political intervention" (13, 15). Though Kuhn's conception of feminist aesthetics can be criticized as depending on a predetermined subject, that is, a subject that is already feminist, Kuhn rightly suggests that specific textual strategies such as avoiding textual closure engender the possibility for radicalizing, catalyzing, or transforming the self.

Subject-position theorists and cultural studies research-projects increasingly have addressed the production of radical selves more directly and in more varied ways than *Screen* theorists, adding to gender and sexual orientation concerns on issues of race, nationality, ethnicity, class, age, and location. In most of these cases, the relation between subject and film (or media) was understood as overdetermined by any or all of the previous identity axes. Such potential multiplicity fostered fragmented subjectivities and denaturalized a purely ideological response to the filmic text, insisting, instead, in the ongoing possibility of counter-hegemonic viewing experiences. In these projects, the political dispositions of individuals furnish a viewing strategy that, using elements

of the text (at the signifier, signifying or signified level), gives place to actions (interpretive actions, libidinal actions, affective actions) that can be seen as political, subversive, and/or resistive. The individual-as-viewer is here determined by identity to enact dispositions proper to its community. Richard Johnson summarizes these issues when he writes: "subjects *are* contradictory, 'in process,' fragmented, produced. But human beings and social movements also strive to produce some coherence and continuity, and through this, exercise control over feelings, conditions, and destinies."[35] Moreover, and much in line with my way of thinking, a most fruitful insight is, according to him, "the notion of a discursive self-production of subjects" (6).

In this tradition is the work of Robert Stam and Louise Spence who, in looking at colonialism and racism, propose that "A particular audience's knowledge or experience can also generate a counterpressure to colonialist representations" and produce "aberrant readings."[36] Jacqueline Bobo also looks at race and studied communities of black women and the way they interpreted films with black characters. Her findings resonate with Stam and Spence's and included the idea that these women resisted mainstream ideas in order "to intervene strategically in the imaginative construction, critical interpretation, and social condition of black women."[37] In both cases, the audiences are examined in terms of their community characteristics and assumed is the complexity of reception. Meaning and action are key to understanding the audiences. This suggests an epistemological emphasis on the individual-as-viewer perspective. Bobo, for instance, rightly assumes that the films she analyzes play a role in the

political lives of their film viewers; yet, her research centers in meaning and finishes in meaning. “Who was the woman in the yellow dress?” is the first question she asks from the film viewers of Steven Spielberg’s *The Color Purple*, and she continues her interviews asking questions about meaning and interpretations. She finishes one of her chapters stating what I believe is one of the goals of this dissertation: “In this respect audience studies can augment the understanding of the specific cultural and historical moment as part of a broader movement toward black women’s empowerment” (196). However, though the film viewer’s political and ethical ideals are conflated with the way they make sense of the world, and no doubt these ethical ideals are evidence of the self-construction of film viewer, questions about meaning and action will not likely shed evidence of these ideals and the way they are used by the film viewer to produce meaning or action. To obtain this evidence it is necessary to open the questions to issues that go beyond meaning and that also do not begin and end with the moment of viewing.

Stam and Spence and Bobo are just two examples of cultural studies approaches to filmic texts and do not do justice to the richness and variety of cultural studies scholarship. Other influential and more contemporary work relies on stronger notions of the self-as-viewer and tackles full force the problem of the relationship between cultural texts (film, television, magazine) and viewers, where viewers are more often treated as subject, individuals, and selves. Heavily influenced by feminism, these approaches problematize the relationship between viewers and texts and its political valence. From

studies of how female viewers related to *Cagney and Lacey* (Julie D'Acci), *Dallas* (Ien Ang), and teen magazines (Lisa Duke), to analyses of the cultural constitution of women's bodies (Susan Bordo),[38] these approaches go beyond issues of meaning and question how hegemonic-gendered ideas of selfhood are addressed and contested in cultural consumption.

D'Acci, writing about *Cagney and Lacey*, addresses selfhood when she queries: "How exactly could an industrially produced mainstream text like *Cagney and Lacey* play a significant part in female fans' effort to reconceive and redefine themselves as women in 1980s U.S. culture?"[39] In her answer she stresses the way viewers negotiated the social character of the text with their personal histories, engendering a process of self-analysis that fostered a productive and political relationship between text and viewer (174). *Cagney and Lacey* invited reflection on the way gender had been constructed socially and suggested to female viewers the political nature of their self-definitions (176).

In a similar vein, Ang and Duke investigate how the viewer/reader's self-definition can help explain how apparently politically suspect texts such as *Dallas* and teen magazines can nonetheless reaffirm politically progressive ideas (or at least not negative ideas) the viewer/reader has of herself. For Ang, women viewer's identification with the Sue Ellen character offered a complex progressiveness for, though masochist in nature, this identification gave women a type of awareness of the complex and tiresome business of being a woman.[40] Duke analyzed how middle-class

African American and white teenage girls interpreted the feminist ideals presented in *Teen*, *Seventeen*, *YM*, and *Sassy*.[41] Her findings include the insight that the sense of self of African American girls, which has been constructed in opposition to white culture, help these girls question the standard of beauty and gendered behavior that the magazines proposed. In each of these instances, the viewer/reader is looked at in terms of subjectivity, individuality, and selfhood. Moreover, in each case one of the outcomes of the process of cultural consumption relates to politics.

The research just mentioned does not necessarily address the formation of film critics as radical liberal selves in the United States but, nonetheless, has helped to establish a tradition of research that concentrated on the actions of marginal individuals and their communities. A number of the critics I use in future chapters (in particular 6 and 7) work from positions of relative marginality from which they construct visions of society that they define as counter-hegemonic. As feminist and leftist critics, some of these individuals perform their work for the benefit of their communities, and their jobs ought to be consistent with their communities' strategies of resistance, definitions of the nature of politics, domination, and freedom.

The usefulness of these research projects for understanding cultural consumption in terms of the politics of everyday life cannot be overstated, and the clarity that they bring to issues of community and individual struggles is commendable. Hoping to profit from such insights, my project is aimed to complement the notion of subject-as-viewer (*Screen* theory), adding to it the notions of the individual-as-viewer and the self-as-

viewer (cultural studies). It is my belief that even when discussing the intricacies of identity and community-identity in the context of film viewing, important questions about the individual, and thus about politics, are left out if the researcher does not take into consideration the role the constitution of the self plays in the determination of everyday life activities, even if these exist within institutional settings. While undoubtedly social structures determine the subject and communal identity determines the individual and its field of action, the self is the expression not simply of determinations but is also the contingent manifestation of freedom. It is via the self that individuals express what they understand as freedom and as history. That is, whereas researching the individual-as-viewer implies paying attention to the level of action, researching the self-as-viewer implies paying attention to what these actions may mean to the individual as self and the way this meaning relates to the psychic image the individual has of itself, and the way this relation may affect future actions. In terms of timelines, researching the individual and the subject is researching the way the past coalesces in the present while researching the self is looking at the way past, present, and future are linked (though not determined) by the self's notion of itself.

As it may already be evident, film critics' relationships to their political communities and their media institutions establishes a duality that at times may be in conflict. Though in the following chapters I will not explicitly explore this area of potential conflict, I will be reading the evidence with this in mind. That said, more

research will be required to understand such an important aspect of film reception by critics.

Revolutionary Selves in Cuban Cinema

What we know about the formation of revolutionary selves in Cuba in their capacity as audiences is relatively small. A few sketches here and there about the way audiences have used film or reacted to it can be found in the relatively large, though slanted, collection of Cuban film and cultural history. These commentaries do not amount to a theory of the viewer-as-self. Rather they appear to exist, for the most part, as illustrations of the way revolutionary culture and institutions were forming a revolutionary Cuban subject. A case that exemplifies such treatment is found in Michael Chanan's compelling history of Cuban cinema. Commenting on the film *For the First Time* (*Por Primera Vez,* 1967, d. Octavio Cortazár), which depicted in documentary style Cuban audiences watching film for the very first time, Chanan elaborates on how most Cuban cinema has attempted to break the film viewer's naïve identification with film by producing film texts that invite reflection and produce historization. Suggesting parallels between actual viewers and the viewers interviewed and filmed in *For the First Time*, he writes: the film "becomes a living analogue of the development of cinema within the Revolution, because here the audience has become, together with the filmmakers, participant observers and observant participators in the same process."[42] In this and other sections of Chanan's history, he implies that the audience has agency.

This must not be understood as equal to a theoretical recognition of the viewer-as-self; in each of the instances in which he deals with viewers, Chanan concedes that the Cuban Revolution or the filmic texts have granted or furnished the referred subject-agency.

Suggested or implied in most research on the topic is the idea that the new Cuban subjectivity was the result of a new film aesthetics that was predicated after the principles of Italian Neorealism and, later, the French New Wave.[43] According to Chanan, and in line with most pro-Revolutionary researchers, the goal of Revolutionary cinema is to produce an active film viewer capable of inserting itself in history and willing, as a result, to participate in the production of the new Cuban nation.[44] In order to reach the level of ideological awareness implied in reflection, Cuban film would have to be able to instill a new relation between cinema and film viewer. This could only be done through the creation and implementation of a new aesthetics capable of demystifying film structures, able to break the illusionist power of classical film narratives.[45]

Jesus García Espinoza and Gutiérrez discuss key aesthetic issues in Cuban film. García's essay, printed originally in 1969, was a useful schema for interpreting Cuban film from the 1960s to the 1980s. [46] Gutiérrez's essay, published in 1988, has been used to explain Cuban cinema of the 1980s and 1990s.[47] Both essays helped to constitute the theoretical horizon of expectations of Cuban film, and this, I argue, narrowed the ways researchers have discussed audiences.[48]

García's important essay tries to establish a new poetics for film. In reaction against the tasteless, passive, and perfect cinema of Hollywood, he proposes a cinema where freedom results from the elegant play of body, mind, and matter, a cinema committed to the social, partisan in politics and thus imperfect in form. [49] García writes: "Imperfect cinema is an answer, but it is also a question which will discover its own answers in the course of its development" (81). It can use any genre or form of expression (and of this are numerous examples in Cuban film), and though it rejects exhibitionism, it can be enjoyable. García also proposes that in order to achieve its poetic potential, and to avoid aestheticisms, imperfect cinema must team up with science and address concerns coming from sociologists, revolutionary leaders, psychologists, and economists. In sum, imperfect cinema attempts to change taste structures to such a point that the *habitus* (from Pierre Bourdieu) and taste-systems can be transformed and, with them, the individual and society (82).[50]

Gutiérrez proposes a film aesthetics able simultaneously to prepare the individual ideologically and to entertain it.[51] This dual and somehow contradictory task can be performed by the poetic use of "show" and "spectacle" and by assuming a real "popular cinema." Following a discussion on classical Hollywood, the French New Wave, and "alternative" cinema, Gutiérrez argues that film can only affect the masses if they accept it. Yet, while most commercial cinema only entertains, most revolutionary cinema appears incapable of arousing the masses' interest and often remains sheltered by an unapproachable aesthetics (113-115). The people must enjoy popular cinema but

the cinema must also come from the people: it must appeal to the senses and emotions but also to the intellect and reason (120). Given these requirements, the realism of popular cinema cannot be the consequence of a straightforward reflection of reality; instead, popular cinema's realism must be able to produce a *new reality* resulting from the bridging of "genuine reality" and fiction (122-123). In Gutiérrez's framework, the filmic text can only entice a type of viewing process, and it is up to the spectator to take full advantage of the potential for critical inquiry the film embodies. Like most Cuban filmmakers, he seeks an active film viewer, but, departing from more typical Third Cinema positions like García's, Gutiérrez understands the fundamental role spectacle and "show" have for the audience.[52]

As it is possible to assess from the previous elaborations on Cuban film aesthetics, the overall goal of the film text was to induce active spectatorship by provoking a dialogue (García) with the realism of the text and with textuality itself (Gutiérrez). García declares it as follows: "Until now, we have viewed the cinema as a means of reflecting reality, without realizing that cinema in itself is a reality, with its own history, conventions, and traditions…to make a new cinema is, in fact, to reveal the process of deconstruction of the one that came before…This process cannot be individual…What is needed is to perform this process jointly with the viewer."[53] However, and in spite of the multiple attempts to draw attention to the film viewer's activity, film theorists continuously positioned film as the medium dictating the dialogue with the people, establishing the parameters of this dialogue, and deciding where the dialogue should go.

One way that this was done was by naturalizing the didactic aspect of the film. For instance, Robert Kolker writes: "In Cuban film, the didacticism sometimes occurs in counterpoint to the narrative. A film will *guide* the audience through a *proper reading* of it, commenting on the images and the narrative, deconstructing them in order that the audience may better understand them."[54] Film narration as a guiding force towards the proper reading is an aesthetics that, according to Katherine S. Kovács, "[combines] classical and documentary techniques in order to call attention to the camera's mediating role in the filmmaking process."[55] Another way of naturalizing the medium's power over dialogue was precisely by emphasizing the dialecticism of some of the films. [56] Julia Lesage commenting on *One Way or Another* addresses both didacticism and dialecticism:

> Due to the variety of filmic discourse and the different forms in which information is presented, the film teaches us how to get close to its thoughts and feelings about projected change, movement, and social context. The film's ideas reach plenitude because they give the public –especially to those Cubans who have conceded with pleasure to the revolutionary process-- the impulse to perform a more conscious and altruistic social action, and the courage needed to try something new or modify those things that, before, were done thoughtlessly.[57]

As a general rule, research on Cuban film has centered on the filmic text's success or failure at forming a new revolutionary Cuban subject. By assuming a didactic and ideological goal for film and evaluating it in these terms, researchers have replicated the institutional goals of ICAIC which are precisely to produce films capable of generating a new Cuban subjectivity. Yet, determining a Cuban subjectivity is not equal to determining a mass audience. ICAIC's goals were always geared towards the formation

of a critical citizenship and thus included (implicitly or explicitly) the goal of forming and training a critical audience. All the didacticism I just mentioned is, indeed, a legitimate area for research. That said, due to efforts of ICAIC and other cultural institutions, the Cuban film audience is not only numerous but is also a rather sophisticated audience, an audience that has received more media training than the average citizen in other countries. Since 1959, ICAIC trained audiences in how to read film using television, magazines, and conferences and talks. Though ICAIC's goals were based on the underlying assumption that Cuban audiences needed to be prepared to withstand the ideological tactics used by Hollywood cinema, the fact is that ICAIC taught them how to read cinema, how to understand characters, character development, and the ways ideology is embedded in messages. Demystifying films was aggressively pursued, and the target was "To reveal all the tricks, all the recourses of language, to dismantle all the mechanisms of cinematography."[58] In addition, ICAIC organized a "TV program which explains all the gimmicks used to attract the viewer's attention" (21). All of these tactics were geared towards developing a participating audience.[59] Furthermore, the formal filmic techniques used by Cuban filmmakers have emphasized the contingent nature of the filmic structure.

Given the potential savvies of the audience and the devices used by the filmmakers to produce ambiguities that can open up the text, it appears odd that so much research has been centered exclusively around the film text or around whether the film text successfully provides the film viewer a space for action. I argue that even

when understood as active, the spectator has been conceived either as an individual (that is as an agent who may or may not respond to the "question" posited by the film or that is able or not to cross the bridge between "genuine reality" and "fiction") or as a subject (that is as determined by discourse, by text, and by history). The self-as-viewer, that is, the spectator as the one who dictates the terms of viewing and interpretation through actions geared to the formation, by himself/herself, of himself/herself, has not been the concern of scholarship about Cuban film. This neglect has produced a lack of questions about the issues of the viewer and individuality, the viewer and freedom, the viewer as a citizen, and the viewer as an ethical self.

Though quite different from American film theory, Cuban scholarship on film presents similar characteristics and, not surprisingly, shows a heavy emphasis on the subject-as-viewer. In both cases the theorization of the self-as-viewer is limited or non-existent. As I have tried to show, key questions about the way political audiences use film have not been asked. In particular, absent are those questions regarding the way individuals working within institutions closely linked to government interpret and value film. For, while cultural workers like Gutiérrez, Guevara, and García Espinosa argued that an active audience was fundamental to the pedagogic goals of film, what type of audience were they? What type of film viewers were those critics working within the confines of cultural institutions?

Dissertation Outline

As I showed in reviewing these two key areas of the literature on film theories, both in the United States and in Cuba film viewers have typically been theorized as subjects and/or as individuals. The exception are some cultural studies approaches heavily influenced by feminism. Applying subject-centered approaches to this dissertation would mean giving a lot of importance to the media and cultural institutions from which the reviews, essays, and comments generated. So speaking, a review from *The Nation*, if typical, would be evidence, perhaps, of an American counter-hegemonic leftism and a media that targets educated liberals in the United States. Conversely, a review printed in *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), if typical, would be evidence of official positions and hegemonic ideas. I believe that the individual would be an important research datum only on those cases where the review is, for any reason, atypical. Freedom, as in opposition from *Granma*, could then be argued. But how should I use these reviews and cultural comments if I am suggesting that such subject-centered film approaches are limited? What does it mean that a review is the result of the subject and of the self?

These questions are explored in Chapter 2, where I examine the relationships of individuals to institutions based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens. In this chapter, I also link modes of reception, one of the key concepts of film reception studies, to a *habitus* and to technologies of self. Given the importance of politics to my

questions, I also explore the issue of technologies of self as governance, and the inclusion of film reception within political communities, in particular feminism.

The following three chapters explore the reception of Cuban films in Cuba by official cultural workers. In Chapter 3, I historicize the development of the post-revolutionary Cuban field of cultural production, paying special attention to cinema. In this chapter, I trace the development of the communities of cultural workers by looking at how cultural institutions coalesced around cultural policies. I argue that these policies became ideatic frameworks that cultural workers consistently used to explain, at least publicly, cultural works and their own role as revolutionary workers. I also argue that cultural policies were the foundation of a Revolutionary hermeneutics that Cuban cultural workers employed to interpret cultural works, including film. Given the relationship of the Revolutionary hermeneutics to policy, their application to interpret and evaluate work can be seen as an aspect of governance. That is, the cultural workers, as cultural vanguard, enacted their dispositions to govern by applying interpretive techniques that would render proper only those works that could fulfill the goals of cultural policy.

In order to develop a hermeneutics that could further the goals of the Revolution, the Cuban field of cultural production needed to develop or adopt proper knowledges about culture, about cultural workers, and about cultural consumption. In Chapter 4 I discuss seven areas of debate that shaped cultural policy and that created organized sets of knowledges that, I suggest, informed many decisions regarding culture. Discourse

one refers to the politicization of culture. Discourse two refers to the goal of culture that was to make the citizenry proper revolutionaries. The third discourse revolves around the role of the intellectual in the Revolution. In the fourth, I examine debates regarding the proper revolutionary art and the proper aesthetics. The fifth discourse looks at the objects of aesthetic reflection that were considered proper to carry on policy goals. In the sixth, I explore the assumption regarding the relationship between the people and cultural works. And lastly, I look at discussions regarding the proper way of policing culture.

In the last of the Cuban chapters, Chapter 5, I examine at length the official reception of Cuban films in relation to the historical contexts of reception and in relation to the Revolutionary hermeneutics. I begin examining the role of the critic within the Revolution and proceed to look at each of the film's reception. My primary evidence consists of reviews, essays, and commentaries in official cultural and journalistic media from Cuba. However, it is important to remark that given that my research was carried on in the United States, the primary evidence reflects only a portion of the potential evidence. That said, my research includes evidence from the most important film journal (*Cine Cubano*), the most important literary journal (*Casa de las Américas*), the most official cultural journals (*Bohemia*, *Revolución y Cultura*), and the most official newspaper (*Granma*). Other evidence comes from sources such as *Unión*, *Adelante*, and *Mujeres* in addition to research produced by non-Cuban researchers. All of this evidence is weighed in relation to issues of technologies of self.

In the following two chapters, I investigate the U.S. critical reception of the same five Cuban films. Chapter 6 establishes a framework for looking at this reception. I begin by addressing the ideological dispositions likely to be available to American critics as these were influenced by Cold War ideologies. I argue that the political and cultural links of Cuba and the United States in the twentieth century provided a basic libretto that was available to most Americans to engage hermeneutically all things Cuban, including film. However, these were not the only frameworks that likely influenced interpretation of Cuban film. In particular leftist and feminist critics of the 1970s and 1980s inhabited a field of cultural production that had been giving space within academia to non-canonical disciplines. The increasing public representation of subjugated knowledges, and the importance of feminist and other identity movements, influenced academic and mainstream film criticism.

In Chapter 7, I look at the U.S. critical reception of the Cuban films and center on evidence coming from liberal (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*), leftist (e.g., *The Nation*, *The New Republic*), and feminist media outlets (e.g., *Ms*.). The evidence also includes a fair amount of more academic sources, since academics have been one of the main groups of people interested in Cuban film. This evidence is analyzed in relation to cultural institutions and the location of the cultural worker within the grids of culture and power, at least as this location is manifested in discourse.

Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation by bringing together the findings of each chapter and comparing them in terms of Cuba versus the United States. I am particularly interested in examining the way different types of political identities shaped reception and the way these modalities of reception relate to different technologies of self-as-viewer.

Each chapter is expected to bring attention to how political identities are evidenced in the social act of film interpretation and evaluation. Moreover, comparing such reception and political settings is expected to illustrate the contingency of modalities of reception and politicized interpretation, as well as their ambiguous relation to normativity. As I will show, while Cuban reception of these films may be normative, the influence of civic goals in private lives defined their interpreting activities as important for the progress of the Revolution and for constituting themselves as cultural vanguards. United States cultural workers, however, used the interpretation of Cuban films to reflect on their cultural locations and to politicize them. Such a style of interpreting, I will argue, attempted to assert the cultural workers' independence from the field of power while aligning with it. Finally, I hope to show how the different ways of using politics to interpret Cuban film signaled a difference in the definitions of political selfhood between Cuba and the United States.

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[1] Michael Myerson, *Memories of Underdevelopment: The Revolutionary Films of Cuba* (New York: Grossman, 1973), 27. Before 1971, American

Documentary Films, Inc. distributed 16 mm copies of Cuban documentaries to schools, religious organizations, and community groups (28).

[2] Though "film-viewing" is a complex process that may refer to issues of perception, text-semiotics, and/or pleasure, in this dissertation the term "viewer" will be used as an index referring to an individual who has seen a film. To connote the complexity of "film-viewing" I will use the term "film viewer."

[3] In this project, I use reception in a relatively limited way. Though reception often refers to all of the psychological, contextual, and textual phenomena that surrounds the moment of contact of viewer and cultural text as well as the outcomes of such contact (e.g. pleasure, interpretations, learning), my evidence is limited. Since I will rely mostly on written commentaries by a very specific set of institutional viewers, in this project reception will refer to some outcomes of the viewing event, and these will include interpretations, evaluations, summaries, and theorizations of the filmic texts. A fuller definition of "reception studies" is below.

[4] To read summaries of the films' storylines, see the Apendix.

[5] In the rest of the dissertation I will use the films' English names.

[6] The politics of interpretation have been a common concern among intellectuals since the 1950s. See W.J.T. Mitchell, "Editor's Introduction: The Politics of Interpretation," *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (September 1982): iii-viii.

[7] According to Hans Georg Gadamer, our engagement with the world is hermeneutical. That is, it is fundamentally directed toward the correct interpretation of our surroundings. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1989 [1960]). Michel Foucault suggests that the idea of self-formation is fundamental to understanding some historical contexts such as Classic Greece and Christianity. Given the importance monitoring one's action has for self-formation, and given that this activity implies interpreting one's actions, the activity of self-formation is hermeneutic. Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 340-72.

[8] Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987); Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

[9] Janice Radway. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Ien Ang, "Meloramatic Identifications: Television Fiction and Women's Fantasy," in *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, ed. Charlotte Brunsdon, Julie D'Acci and Lynn Spigel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 155-66; Julie D'Acci, *Defining Women: Television and the Case of "Cagney and Lacey"* (Chapel Hill:

The University of North Carolina Press, 1994). See also the section "Radical Selves in the U.S.A."

[10] However, I centered mostly on the hermeneutic aspect of reception and less on the activities surrounding the event of reception. This approach is the result of the time and logistic limitations of the project.

[11] The key texts that outline Staiger's ideas on reception theory are *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and also *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

[12] Staiger, *Interpreting Films,* xi.

[13] See Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *The Final Foucault*, ed. J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988), 18.

[14] I am aware of the obvious sexism of the term New Man. That said, Cubans often used the term to refer to a sexually indeterminate individual. With this in mind, I have changed the gender of the term depending on the context. Lina, for instance, a character in *Up to a Certain Point*, is the one who embodies the characteristics of the New Man. In that context, I refer to the New Man as a "she."

[15] Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), xxxiii-xxxiv.

[16] To elaborate on the topic, look for the entries "Individual" and "Subjective" in Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana, 1976).

[17] Smith, *Discerning*, xxvii.

[18] Toby Miller, *The Well Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[19] I use this terminology momentarily and with the understanding that in the rest of the dissertation I will basically refer to processes of interpretation and hermeneutics, not to the full spectrum of viewing processes that may include perceptual issues, textual semiotics, and pleasure, to name a few.

[20] One of the most representative editions of this tradition of thinking in the area of film theory is *Screen* editorial board, *The Sexual Subject : A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[21] Louis Althusser, "Interview on Philosophy" [1968], in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 11-22.

[22] Robert Stam, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 1992), 37.

[23] Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 690-707.

[24] Stam, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics*, 143.

[25] Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse: Notes on Two Kinds of Voyeurism," in *Movies and Methods: Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Los Angeles: University of California Press., 1985), 543-48.

[26] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the State" [1968], in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 162.

[27] Baudry, "The Apparatus," 690-692.

[28] In a sense these pessimistic views addressed the feeling of powerlessness resulting from the defeats the Left suffered during the late 1960s in France and in the United States.

[29] Quoted in Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 171.

[30] Irigaray's work was heavily criticized during the 1970s. She even lost her psychoanalysis teaching position and was criticized for essentializing the feminine, for assuming the feminine to be the pre-Oedipal, the imaginary, the unconscious, the subject from which the self could act. See Stephen Heath, "Difference," in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* editorial board (London: Routledge, 1992), 47-106. See also Judith Butler's comments where Irigaray is vindicated of the charges of essentialism. Judith P. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 18.

[31] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" [1975], in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* editorial board (London: Routledge, 1992), 22-34.

[32] Jackie Stacey, "Desperately Seeking Difference" [1987], in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* editorial board (London: Routledge, 1992), 244-59; Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator" [1982], in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* editorial board (London: Routledge, 1992), 227-43; Stephen Heath, "Difference."

[33] Peter Lehman, *Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Male Body* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Richard Dyer, "Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up" [1983], in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* editorial board (London: Routledge, 1992), 265-76; Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (London: Routledge, 1990).

[34] Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (New York: Verso, 1993), 12.

[35] Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 5, Winter 1986/1987: 69.

[36] Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction," in *Movies and Methods: Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 646.

[37] Jacqueline Bobo, *Black Women as Cultural Readers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 27.

[38] See for instance Julie D'Acci's influential studies of the popular television show compiled in her monograph *Defining Women*; Ien Ang, "Melodramatic Identifications"; Lisa Duke, "Black in a Blonde World: Race and Girls' Interpretations of the Feminine Ideal in Teen Magazines," *Journalism & Mass*

Communication Quarterly 77, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 367-92; Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (London: University of California Press, 1993).

[39] D'Acci, *Defining Women*, 169.

[40] Ang, "Melodramatic Identifications," 164-165.

[41] Duke, "Black in a Blonde World," 367.

[42] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image: Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 15.

[43] For more insights in the historical evolution of the new aesthetics, see Oscar Quiros, "From Aesthetics of Hunger to Hunger for Aesthetics in Cuban Cinema," XV Annual International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, September 21, 1989. For a reflective look at Quiros's proposals, see John Hess and Catherine Davies, "No Mas Habermas, or Rethinking Cuban Cinema in the 1990s," *Screen* 40, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 346. Commenting on the issue of the new aesthetics, Chanan argues that Andre Breton and Diego Rivera influenced some of Fidel Castro's positions thanks to their "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art"; Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 106. The influence of Italian Neorealism is a standard interpretation of history and influences. Ana M. López, "An 'Other' History: The New Latin American

Cinema," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 1. Theories, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 140. In addition, Chanan popularizes the idea of the influence of the French New Wave. Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 128-131.

[44] Diana Agosta and Patricia Keeton, "Filming the Face of the Future," *Afterimage* 22, no. 2 (September 1994): 9. The Revolution placed high hopes on the power of mass media, including cinema, to socialize the Cuban people. Conversely, those that are not pro-revolution describe it as filmic tradition producing dupes: Alan Adelman sees Cuban film as propaganda and ideological education: "In sum, for Cuban filmmakers the content of cinema is only as effective a revolutionary weapon as its form allows. The capacity of the audience to make a class analysis due to distanciation and open-ended devices in the film is essential to Marxist theory of art." Alan Adelman, *A Guide to Cuban Cinema* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh, 1981), 6.

[45] According to Guevara and given that the taste of Cuban audiences is corrupted, ICAIC must teach audiences how to see film. Cinema must produce a savvy audience, capable of reflecting on cinema and capable of understanding filmic codes such as characters, genres, and plots. Cubans like American films because they understand them not because of their ideology; but, of course, the

reason they understand them is partly because of their ideology. Myerson, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, 19.

[46] García's influence on film ("For an Imperfect Cinema," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 1. Theories, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993], 71-82.), thanks to his essay "For an Imperfect Cinema," also created a horizon of expectations that placed limits on discussions about the relation between viewer and text. See Timothy Barnard, "Death is not True: Form and History in Cuban Film," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 2. Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 143-54.

[47] According to Davies and Quiros, "imperfect cinema" has declined during the 1980s, giving way to more standard ways of producing narratives, and oriented toward more spectacle. Davies also suggests that such changes have rendered a less "critical and effective" Cuban film. Hess and Davies, "No Mas Habermas," 347.

[48] Gutiérrez's influence on cinema aesthetics serves as an horizon of expectations for much commentary about specific film's aesthetics. Gutiérrez, "The Viewer's Dialectic," in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 103-130; Barnard, "Death is not True," 148.

[49] García, “For an Imperfect Cinema,” 71, 79.

[50] For a discussion on *habitus*, see Chapter 2.

[51] Gutiérrez, “The Viewer's Dialectic,” 114.

[52] The Argentinean directors Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas coined the term Third Cinema. Getino and Solanas, “Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World,” in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 33-58. In their proposals, First Cinema refers to Hollywood, Second Cinema to auteur cinema (Nouvelle Vague, Cinema Novo, expressionist cinema) which offers alternatives to Hollywood. Third Cinema refers to “films that the system cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its need, or making film that directly and explicitly set out to fight the system” (42). The evolution of Third Cinema aesthetics has been, however, substantial, and thus this tradition cannot be simplistically reduced to a rejection of those two types of cinema; instead, it is better to characterize it as a struggle to define filmic practices capable of addressing diverging grass-roots politics and social needs around the globe.

[53] Quoted in Julianne Burton, “Film Artisans and Film Industries in Latin America, 1956-1980: Theoretical and Critical Implications of Variations in Modes

of Filmic Production and Consumption," in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 159.

[54] The emphasis is mine. Robert P. Kolker, *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 279.

[55] Katherine S. Kovács, "Revolutionary Consciousness and Imperfect Cinematic Forms," *Humanities in Society* 4, no. 1 (1981): 104.

[56] Marvin D'Lugo makes reference to the audience in terms of the way the film *Hasta Cierto Punto* creates a space where the audience is aligned with the nation. This results in a narrative tactic. D'Lugo, "*Transparent Women*: Gender and Nation and Cuban Cinema," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 2. Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 155-66.

[57] Julia Lesage, "*De Cierta Manera*, de Sara Gomez: Pelicula Dialéctica, Revolucionaria y Feminista," in *Discurso Femenino Actual*, ed. Adelaida Lopez de Martinez (Puerto Rico: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995), 292. (Translation by the author.) In a similar vein, Kuhn has suggested about *De Cierta Manera* that the ambiguity present in the strategy of distanciation used by Gómez "tends to force the spectator into an active relation with the text, opening up the potential for questioning and analysis." Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, 164. I want to insist that their

comments apply to the Cuban text in general. This effect, used relatively often by Cuban filmmakers, is also achieved by the mixing of genres, media, styles, and epochs.

[58] Myerson, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, 21.

[59] See also James R. Macbean's interview with Gutiérrez. Macbean, "A Dialogue with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: On the Dialectics of the Spectator in *Hasta Cierto Punto*," *Film Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1985): 22-29.

2

Theories and Methods for Technologies of Self in Film Interpretation

As discussed in Chapter 1, mine is a contribution to reception theory that tries to acknowledge the hermeneutic and phenomenological levels at which processes of reception work in politicized viewers. It does not claim to be a general explanation of film reception. Instead, my arguments are only applicable to a subset of events of reception. I address *some* reception practices that, I argue, are more often found in marginal communities (communities that define themselves in tension with the hegemony they inhabit) or revolutionary communities (communities inhabiting a society in quick transformation). The ideology the community embraces (it can be Marxist, feminist, leftist, conservative, etc.) does not define this subset of practices. What defines them, I suggest, is the historical need of these communities for redefinition. Communities where the methodical transformation of the self occupies a central position in their respective systems of thought are commonly found in these historical settings. Like Janet Staiger, I am trying to elucidate the event of reception, in particular as it pertains to interpretation; more specifically, I propose to look at how political ideas, including ideas about selfhood, predetermine interpretation and cultural commentary. For, I believe, as important as delineating the "history of the interactions between real readers and texts" [1] is defining, or at least questioning, the role these interactions play in the spectator's life.

"Let me make the proposition that every period of history (and likely every place) witnesses several modes of cinematic address, several modes of exhibition, and several modes of reception" (21). In this concise fashion, Staiger establishes four important layers of analysis in film and media theory: historicity, complexity, multiplicity, and interrelatedness. Though types of addresses, exhibition, and reception are multiple, historical and social occurrences are likely to form normative types of address, institutionalized forms of exhibition, and interpretive communities that embrace conventional reception modalities (23). These ideas are quite relevant to my project since, as commented in Chapter 1, I will examine how two communities (official reviewers in Cuba and liberal/leftist reviewers in the United States) gathered around or within cultural institutions (official press and cultural journals in Cuba and liberal magazines and newspapers in the United States), related to the types of addresses and textual characteristics of five revolutionary Cuban films dating from 1968 to 1983. This fifteen-year period was, in Cuba and in the United States, one of rapid cultural transformation. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the rise of feminist, leftist, and racial movements in the U.S. (and their retrenchment) produced the conditions for institutional change (due to revolution or marginalization). It is in this context that I will attempt to establish whether technologies of self were part of the modes of reception.

Given the characteristics of the project, it is necessary to establish the theoretical and conceptual foundations that will help me explain the following: What are the relationships between the individual (cultural worker), communities, and institutions?

How do modes of exhibition, address, and reception relate to institutions? After examining these issues, I will argue the following: 1) Cultural workers function within social systems, which, adopting Pierre Bourdieu's terminology I call fields of cultural production, present the characteristics of a *habitus* which is always structuring according to Anthony Giddens. Using Bourdieu and Giddens allows me to conceive of the cultural worker's location as a position defined, simultaneously, by subjection and by freedom.[2] This section is quite important methodologically for it also allows me to argue that my primary evidence can, and should, be used as evidence of critic-as-subject and as evidence of the critic-as-self. 2) Some individuals and communities construct technologies of spectatorship. 3) Technologies of spectatorship incorporate techniques of interpretation and are thus doubly hermeneutical. They imply the interpretations of one's actions and the interpretation of the world. 4) Technologies of spectatorship fuel the productivity of identity via double hermeneutics. 5) The productivity of identity has important implication for citizenship. 6) Given that citizenship is a form of governance, in the last section I explore the Foucauldian idea of governmentality in relation to the cases I examine in this dissertation. I base my theoretical arguments on the works of Teresa de Lauretis, Elizabeth Ellsworth, Staiger, Bourdieu, Giddens, and Michel Foucault. From Bourdieu and Giddens, I will borrow a theory of society, in particular their notions regarding social structures and agency, and Bourdieu's insights on the field of cultural production. From Foucault, I use his ideas about technologies of self and technologies of governance. From Staiger, I use her notions of reception and

spectatorship. And de Lauretis and Ellsworth help me explain the relationship of technologies of self and spectatorship.

Structures, *Habitus,* Agents, and Change

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the relationship between film viewers and texts have been explored from several theoretical perspectives, and I centered on *Screen* theory and cultural studies. *Screen* subject-centered approaches, I wrote, can be improved by bringing to the fore issues of selfhood, much in the way that some cultural studies researchers do it. This would also be an addition to film reception studies. As I also suggested, the theoretical and methodological implications of considering selfhood require me to revise, or at least review, basic assumptions about society, institutions, and individuals.

Critics, essayists, and cultural commentators, as well as filmmakers, inhabit social systems within which they constitute themselves as professionals and, insofar as they perform according to socio-economic expectations, as citizens. The systems of culture, that in the following chapters I refer to as the field of cultural production, likely behave in some ways that can be generalized, though specific fields, such as the Cuban or American, present unique characteristics that are given only within contingent sets of possibilities. In this section I present very general ideas regarding the workings of social systems and relate these to modes of reception.

Bourdieu uses the concept of "field of cultural production" in order to explain cultural transactions and meanings within a society. This field is a methodological and theoretical shortcut that characterizes the cultural world as a social system with structural properties. For him, the field of culture occupies a position within the field of power (the system of power relations or the "ruling classes), and this position is of subordination.[3] The intellectual class that comprises the cultural field lacks economic and political power, and for that reason Bourdieu refers to it as a dominated segment of the dominant class.[4] Holding the field together are not simply the structural relations between its sub-fields (i.e., criticism, film production) but also the field's "*habitus*," which structure dispositions and practices within the field.

The cultural field is a social system, a system of practice and relations, and as such it tends to exhibit recursive and self-organizing properties that allows it to endure over time. Social systems exhibit structural properties, as Giddens puts it, in that they constitute a virtual order and are rule-based, instantiated at each social interaction.[5] However powerful the forces of order, these are not omnipotent determinants of social actions nor the subject a by-product of the structure's workings.[6] Because social structures can only be instantiated through individual actions and practices, they are liable to be modified by contingent conditions of probability and/or by the unintended or intended consequences of actions.[7] Given this, the relationship of individuals to social systems can be described as one of mutual constitution and mutual structuring. In general, then, cultural workers, through their actions, continuously constitute

themselves as workers while reconstituting the economic, political, and cultural relationship that define the worker's location in the field.

Stratification shapes relationships among social systems. In Western societies, Bourdieu comments, social stratification is the result of the relationships between discrete class structures defined by the economic and cultural capital of their members.[8] Within each class, and across classes, different lifestyles correspond to divisions, as they are made possible by different *habitus*. *Habitus* is a key concept in Bourdieu's work for it serves both as a theoretical formulation about classes and communities and the way these are structured, and also because it becomes a unit of analysis in and of itself. It is important to this project because it highlights the cultural aspects of the social.

Habitus is a structured system of dispositions that "organize practices and representations."[9] It is, according to Bourdieu, social and temporal in that it belongs to communities for it marks a lifestyle and corresponds to the instantiation in the present of the history of those communities:

> The *habitus*—embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history—is the captive presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present. This autonomy is that of the past, enacted and acting, which, functioning as accumulated capital, produces history on the basis of history and so ensures the permanence in change that makes the individual agent a world within a world (56).

The *habitus* regulates the individual since the *habitus* provides a system of possibilities for action and also provides the means by which to make decisions (54).

The *habitus* includes systems of cognitive and motivating structures that help agents act ethically within the *habitus*. It governs thought, expression, and action while constituting the objective possibilities of freedom.

Although the *habitus* appears to be a totalizing concept, the idea of the *habitus* allows Bourdieu to circumvent the dichotomy of subject versus agent, for it assumes that some actions within the *habitus* are experienced not as subjection or obedience but as acts of freedom (53). Moreover, since the *habitus* is not only objectified on social structures, but also on the bodies and minds of individuals, it would be improper to talk about the social as subjecting the individual. Agents exist in positions from which they are constantly enacting and modifying the *habitus*, always structuring, always in sites of regulated freedom. Moreover, and returning to Giddens, agents within the *habitus* are knowledgeable and reflexive. Giddens writes that "reflexivity should be understood not merely as self consciousness but as the monitoring of the ongoing flow of social life."[10] Thus, reflexivity produces not only knowledge of the self, but simultaneously, it produces knowledge of social life.

Rephrasing these ideas in terms of cultural workers, I suggest that understanding the field of cultural production as a *habitus* allows me to theorize the position of the cultural worker as a location found at the intersection of normative discourses and regulatory practices, with discourses and practices of freedom. Thus understood, the product of the labor of a cultural worker becomes, at least potentially, not solely an expression of social systems as subjection (i.e., discourse or ideology) but also an

expression of the worker's contingent freedom. Such an observation carries methodological implications, for it means that in reviewing evidence (such as critiques, essays, and reviews of specific films) I must consider the evidence's duality, as proof of systemic determinations and as proof of the cultural worker's freedom. As is common in contemporary approaches to cultural studies, I do not assume that the film viewer's agency is only expressed via counter-hegemonic statements.[11] Without denying the usefulness of such theorizations and methods, they are based on the flawed assumption that the researcher and/or the film viewer can objectify the system of oppression to which a "resistive" reading responds.

Though Bourdieu and Giddens are more concerned with system stasis, or how systems become homeostatic, *habitus* and social systems can change. Change can be the result of external pressures, such as changes on international trade or immigration, or internal pressures. Internally, change is possible because a dialectics of mutual objectification marks the relationship between individual and *habitus*. That is, not only are the *habitus* or social structures objectified in the body of the agent, but the agent can and does objectify the *habitus* or social system, making it an object of knowledge.[12] Hence, individuals can reflect on changing material relationships, especially as these relationships structure their actions, or they can reflect on different aspects of material relationships, particularly as these pertain to their lives.

Knowledge of the *habitus* can never be complete, and thus individuals cannot fully determine the social system. Regardless, individuals are expected to reflect on

ethics (action), logics (common sense and knowledge), and aesthetics (taste). It can be said that individuals could not function without exercising their reflexive powers. Individuality itself, especially in liberal societies, is partly defined by reflexivity; to be an individual means to be able and willing to reflect on actions, knowledges, and tastes. This is a common way one crafts oneself. Moreover, a Western cultural understanding of individuality would define reflection itself as an act of freedom. Ironically, even though reflection is more likely to illuminate the futility of hope, by illustrating the reality of subjection, reflection is still perceived as freedom. To think about the structure may not transform it, but it transforms the agent and, thus, the structure.[13] Unstoppable, the dialectic of re-constitution is an important disposition of the *habitus* in the West, a disposition that mirrors the drive towards individuality.

The definition of individuality in liberal societies gives these systems a centrifugal force, pushing always the structure toward change, toward chaos, toward movement. In a very real sense, the tendency to entropy of liberal societies makes their fragilely composed hierarchy of structures subject to change. Given that ethics, knowledge, and taste systems are intrinsic to the *habitus*, as Bourdieu states, and that they all form a mutually constitutive structure, as is implied by Giddens, then, change to any of these systems changes them all.[14] The way I use change is not equal to the way the traditional Marxist academy has used it. Change is not only revolution. The degree of change that I recognize as significant can be small enough that critics may call it insignificant and ready for appropriation by the system or hegemony. Without denying

the value of theories of appropriation and theories of hegemony, these theories tend to interpret reality and its stasis or change from a grand point of view. From this lens, change can only be seen as something that radically perturbs society, capitalism, or history. The Cuban Revolution would be used as an example of "change." My perspective is more modest in that I look at how communities and individuals have experienced change over time, even within broad social changes or broad social stasis. For me, the personal and communal allow me to understand social structures, and I believe that Giddens and Bourdieu would approve.

One area of Bourdieu's work that is particularly useful to my arguments is his investigations on taste and aesthetics. Bourdieu commented extensively on how art and art institutions in France relied on Kantian ideas of disinterestedness to produce distinctions among classes.[15] These social structures depended, for their functioning, on the artistic gaze to mark class membership. The artistic gaze, which implied the disinterested contemplation of the work of art, was a learned marker of distinction that masked itself as a natural ability. Those who were able to use it (those who had learned it), distinguished themselves as members of the dominant class, and thus the activity was disinterested on one level and self-interested on another. The aesthetic gaze, he added, reproduced a *habitus* that naturalized existing social orders and legitimized class distinctions.[16]

Since the aesthetic gaze can easily be seen as a mode of reception, it is possible to integrate Staiger's work into Bourdieu's framework. Modes of reception can be defined

as spectatorial practices based on a specific *habitus*. Thus defined, modes of reception become techniques of film viewership immersed in a class (and community) structure and thus deeply related to actions, thoughts, and feelings. Moreover, since practice tends to be, according to Bourdieu, both a system of regularities and one of conveniences, modes of reception can be seen not only as establishing a range of possibilities of interpretation, like Staiger suggests, but also as signaling a type of social economy.[17] That is, modes of reception are likely to be determined by their convenience and thus likely to be used in an instrumental fashion. This is particularly important for this project because I will be arguing that specific modes of reception were used as viewing techniques to further the goal of self-formation and that these became part of the discursive consciousness of some Cubans and some Americans.

What these Cubans and Americans had in common was the fact that they worked within institutional settings. In Cuba, official reviewers belonged to cultural institutions and were closely linked to government. In the United States, reviewers belonged to, roughly speaking, liberal media institutions. A significant amount of research on cultural and media institutions exists, but at the present, I want only to mention that I use the term institution to refer, with Giddens, to standardized modes of behavior that glue social systems and that guarantee their reconstitution through everyday activities.[18] In this sense, film viewing and reception are institutionalized activities in that they rely on standardized modes of social behavior for film exhibition, filmic address, and film reception. Moreover, film and cultural criticism, which are the areas of social activity

from which I will draw most of my primary evidence, are institutional activities and rely on standardized job performance.

While Bourdieu rarely uses the term institution, his views about the cultural world are compliant with Giddens's views of institutions. Borrowing from Foucault, Bourdieu refers to the cultural realm as "the field of cultural production."[19] For him, this field is a social system that conforms to the rules of its own *habitus*, that behaves in structural fashion, and that is invested in its own reproduction (29-73). Members of the field perform their jobs in ways such that will make normative a type of cultural production, a type of cultural work, in short, a type of aesthetics, in the broadest sense. Given that they belong to a *habitus*, members of the field are likely to have embodied the characteristics of the structure and likely to feel, act, and think in ways that support the survival of the field. If understood in this manner, film and cultural criticism are jobs performed in normative fashion and that apply standards of value based on aesthetic principles that reconstitute the field. This is so, because, Bourdieu insists, artistic and cultural mediators (publishers, agents, academics, art teachers and so forth) are producers of meaning and value of works. "Each work thus becomes an expression of the field as a whole. Within this framework, internal analysis alone is indeed untenable and reductive."[20] Moreover, since film and cultural criticism are jobs that depend on film viewership and interpretation, those performing them are likely to have embraced standard modes of reception.

That said, the way the fields of cultural production are formed in Cuba and the United States is significantly different. Some of these differences have to do with the relationship between each film world to each government. In post-revolutionary Cuba, the field of cultural production is one closely related ideologically to government and to the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) (though things have been changing during the 1990s). In the United States, the field of cultural production occupies more ambiguous ideological spaces that range from art worlds and popular culture systems that replicate hegemonic structures, to art and popular culture that are, at least for a time, counter-hegemonic. The film world is no exemption.

If each is understood as a *habitus*, the Cuban and the U.S. fields of cultural production are different social systems not only in that they exist in different nation-states but also in that each is structured by and around different relationships to national fields of power and to hegemonic systems including hegemonic culture. As a *habitus*, the field of cultural production in Cuba will reflect a privileged relationship to power that will likely structure the system of possibilities for action and the types of decisions that will occur within it. Moreover, the cognitive and motivating structures of the field will constitute knowledges and structures of feeling that ethically normalize such relationship to power. This is not to say that such *habitus* is one that will lack freedom; rather, it is to say that even freedom will be defined in a way suitable to the *habitus*. And, of necessity, the type of agency that members of the *habitus* will exhibit will rest

on the monitoring of the relationship between the field, the government, and the individual by each member.

Similarly, as a *habitus*, the field of cultural production in the United States will reflect its ambiguous relationship to power, and this ambiguity will likely structure the system of possibilities for action and the types of decisions that will occur. As in Cuba, the cognitive and motivating structures of the field will constitute knowledges and structures of feeling to normalize ethically such ambiguous relations to power. This is not to say that the U.S. field of cultural production is one that will lack an understanding of oppression and freedom but to say that even oppression will be defined in a way suitable to the *habitus*. And, of necessity, the type of agency that members of the *habitus* will exhibit will rest on the monitoring of the relationship between the field, the government, and the individual by its members.

Technologies of the Self

Being in a social system implies that members of the system will be able to reflect, to some degree, on their behavior, that of others, and at least on some of the changes in their immediate surroundings. Such reflection is fundamental for the reconstitution of the *habitus*. Reflecting on the rules governing the *habitus*, for instance, allows for normativity and ethics to exist within consensual relations. Indeed, to be a good member of a community requires an individual to sustain a level of reflexivity and self-monitoring throughout a certain amount of time and to know and recognize existing

ethical rules. But rules change for many reasons, and the social settings that I am interested in exploring, the revolutionary Cuban and feminist and leftist American settings, certainly changed during the 1960s. Being a good citizen in Cuba before the Revolution was different from being a good citizen after 1959. Similarly, being a good citizen before the 1960s social movements was somehow different from being a good citizen after feminism, the Civil Rights movement, and the New Left. Ways of being ethical had changed.

Interestingly, similar tactics in the United States and in Cuba facilitated some of these changes. In the United States, feminists and leftists and, in Cuba, revolutionaries used conversion techniques in order to expand the membership of their growing communities. In the United States, New Left groups and radical feminists have used consciousness-raising tactics since the middle of the 1960s. In Cuba, revolutionaries have strived to develop *conciencia* in the population since 1959. Among the things these similar conversion techniques required from the participants was reflecting on oneself and the social context. In both cases, the final goal was to establish an ethical foundation from which the individual could challenge her/his own oppression and be able to function in society as an agent of progressive change. Simply speaking, consciousness-raising and developing *conciencia* were techniques based on a prescribed ethical relationship to oneself and to others that attempted to shape the self. In both cases the ultimate goal was to make better citizens.

Processes of personal transformation were of great importance to Michel Foucault who, by investigating issues of the self, attempted to make sense of the failings of the left in 1968. Before that year, most of his work dealt with technologies of subjection or the practices and knowledges used to subject.[21] Breaking away from that path, Foucault showed in *The Care of the Self* and *The Use of Pleasure*, both written during the 1970s, that people have more freedom than they realize.[22] It is in these works that he develops the notion of technologies of self.

As defined by him, technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality."[23] Using technologies of the self, individuals address issues of personal identity, community, personal freedom, and historicity. They do so by embracing culturally specific ways of ethically taking care of themselves. This process of self-formation depends on reflection and on defining such reflection, and the actions ensued by it, as acts of contingent freedom.

Like in the case of feminism, the individual does not create the technologies she/he will use to transform herself nor does she/he create the "utopian" form the self may be shaped after; a *habitus*, provides both things. Nonetheless, at the individual level of analysis, technologies of self are not simply evidence of subjection; at the individual level of analysis, technologies of self are practices of contingent liberation,

practices the individual takes toward the constitution of its freedom and completion. That is, Foucault uses technologies of the self to talk about the fact that ideology is not reflected in a straightforward fashion in the individual and that the relationship between social structures and individual practice is highly dynamic, prone to discontinuities and multiplicities.[24] These technologies address the historically specific modes in which individuals come to understand themselves as subjects by providing individuals with the know-how to interpret and reflect on their own experiences. But besides providing techniques of hermeneutics, technologies of the self function, at the social and individual levels, to draw the boundaries of freedom and liberty because they ask the individual *actively* to seek methods for self-fashioning and propose a final shape or form for the self that in most instances fits the historical representation of a free man or a free woman.[25]

At this stage in Foucault's work, the subject is not simply determined by power, knowledge, and discourse. Through the optics of the self, the subject is also seen as capable of determining its own ethical trajectory and of choosing its own ethical work. It would be erroneous to interpret this theoretical movement simply as a late recognition of the importance of agency or an attempt to mark strict boundaries between determination and freedom, the ethical and the political, the subject and the self.[26] For, while the target of technologies of self is likely freedom (as it is historically instantiated by discourse, power, and knowledges), the tools the individual uses to implement these technologies are, ironically, borrowed from technologies of government. In this way

technologies of self hinge the individual to society at two levels: at the level of discourse and knowledge, where technologies constitute cultural and social possibilities, and also at the level of power, where these technologies form part of the relation between self and other.

That technologies of self borrow from technologies of government is far from causal. In fact, this is a way in which Foucault acknowledges the power of the subject and the intersubjective nature of this power. That is, technologies of self describe the governance of the self by the self and prepare the individual to function in specific communities. And just like in governance of a state, technologies of the self can be seen as technologies of self-government informed by specific notions of (personal) sovereignty, (personal) freedom, and (personalized) techniques of government.[27] Foucault writes:

> I say that governmentality implies the relationship of self to self, which means exactly that, in the idea of governmentality, I am aiming at the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other. It is free individuals who try to control, to determine, to delimit the liberty of others and, in order to do that, they dispose of certain instruments to govern others. That rests indeed on freedom, on the relationship of self to self and the relationship to the other.[28]

Technologies of the self are practices that though implying normativity, as all technologies do, relate to freedom of the self *and* to government of self and others, demarcating those ethical and political realms that can be found and are experienced converging in everyday life. Going back to Bourdieu and Giddens, now I can state that technologies of self are special types of social practices that hinge subjectivity to

contingent practices of freedom and do so by way of a promise: This promise is that some styles of being ethical will grant the individual the potential to govern others.[29]

In short, technologies of the self are processes enacted by the individual on herself/himself with the goal of achieving an ideal or idealized state of being. The methodical disciplining and regulation of certain aspects of the self characterizes these processes, therefore implying constant monitoring of actions, thoughts, and/or interactions. While moral in their outlook (and thus easy to see as types of subjection, as obedience to rules and regulations), they are acts that fall within the discursive realms of freedom and agency and can be seen as free exercises of ethical dispositions. I will go back to governmentality after the following section in which I examine the relationship of film viewing and technologies of self.

Film Viewing as Technology

Considering that technologies of self allow individuals to shape their ethical lives, it seems somehow paradoxical to think that a cultural worker, bound by an institution, uses a technology of self while viewing and interpreting film. Yet, film viewing, interpretation, and enjoyment are social activities constituted in a *habitus* and as such they are likely to manifest at least some of the properties that I discussed earlier. Because it belongs to a *habitus*, and as discussed in most film theory, viewing is an activity bound by tradition;[30] it is accumulated cultural capital that ensures the permanence of the *habitus*. As with any other social practice, however, film viewing is

not simply an expression of social structures but also an expression of the film viewer's ability to structure the system. And just as film viewers exist "in sites of regulated freedom," film viewing is exercised in "relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present."[31]

The apparent paradox exists nonetheless. This is so because of the strong tendency within film and cultural studies to equate normative readings and the application of normative modalities of reception to hegemonic practices. Explained as such, and in particular as is found in research about Hollywood, normative film viewing is somehow valued as immoral. A more careful examination of this issue, in particular one that accounts for the politicization of viewers, is necessary if I am to continue with my argument that film viewing can be seen as belonging to technologies of self. But first, it is necessary to inscribe film reception within an ethical genealogy. In addition, in order to claim that film viewing and interpretation are processes that fit the analytical category of technologies of the self, it is necessary to answer, at the very least, the following questions: Is film reception a moral or an ethical activity? Is film reception a practice that defines the identity of the individual? Is film reception based in a *techne*? And, is this *techne* explicit and transmittable? Is this *techne* also a technology of the self? If so, how does film reception as a technology of the self work? To begin investigating these questions, I want to return to the issue of film viewership and normativity.

It is possible to extrapolate the following from Staiger's work on reception: Film reception and spectatorship are usually understood as normative activities either because they are performed within normative frameworks determined by culture and society – roughly coinciding with text-activated and context-activated theories of reception– or because they are understood as an acceptance or rejection of hegemonic structures – roughly fitting reader-activated theories of reception, particularly those informed by cultural studies.[32] Following Foucault's way of seeing morality and ethics, it is possible to say that the former approaches, because they are practices that abide by social rules, correspond to a moral outlook. Stated differently, theories that frame film reception's normativity in terms of social determinations bind normativity to morality. In these theories, inquiries about the way moral codes are structured and obeyed take precedence over issues of freedom or agency. Conversely, theories that understand film reception's normativity as an issue of whether film viewers accept or reject hegemony bind normativity to ethics. Implicit in these lines of research are queries about the way film viewers "constitute themselves as moral subjects to their own actions."[33] The latter is the way Foucault defines ethics. Not unlike in Foucault's analyses, viewer-activated theories likely concentrate on the film viewers' activities, on the way film viewers make themselves political subjects, and often leave room for the possibility of freedom or agency. I will elaborate in these two points below.

Although in the contemporary context of theory most approaches assume that film viewer and text are mutually constituted, a significantly larger number of investigations

have started from a textual or psychological position, as Staiger has suggested. In doing so, the idea of a mass public is inadvertently recreated. In this approach to normativity and determination, film is a complex layering of meanings that offers normative patterns of aural, visual, and kinetic interpretation; character identification; narrative signification; and linguistic interpretation. Either text or psychology determines these normative patterns, and in both cases potentially determines the moment of reception and the spectator. Even in cases where spectatorship is explained as a process partly guided by the unconscious, like in explanations coming from psychoanalytic film theory, spectatorship becomes normative either because the filmic text shows patterns of signification capable of triggering commonly held unconscious characteristics or because the psyche of the spectator infuses filmic signifiers with meanings and orders these meanings in a system that echoes patterns of desire, fantasy, repression and fear.[34] In all cases a certain degree of *correspondence* occurs between the textuality of film and the spectators' subjectivities, and in all cases at least a suspicion, if not a certainty, exists that similar historical processes produced film and spectator. Normativity here means that the *productivity* of text and/or psychology is bound to the reconstitution of subject(s).[35] For this to be true, normativity must be reduced to its homeostatic properties, to its ability to *reproduce* social structures.

Normative film viewership certainly can be discussed in richer terms. For instance, evidence of normativity (and non-normativity) may be found in what viewing produces, namely a normative subjectivity and a normative "reading," but it is also

found in the activities that the film viewer performs while watching film. Elaborating on reader-activated theories of reception, Staiger brings attention to this level of evidence when she reviews scholarship on the viewing strategies of historical audiences.[36] To this effect she comments on the way viewers act in relation "to compositional features" and the way film viewers hypothesize on issues of "verisimilitude, aesthetics, narration, and discourse." These activities include what viewers do before, during, and after the screening, as well as the sense-making process occurring throughout. Staiger argues that though normative patterns of action may exist when some viewers watch chronological/narrational film, the variety of actions that can be witnessed in spectators attest to their "perversity." While normative activities may include specific types of engagement with characters (e.g., "For [David] Bordwell, figuring out who the protagonist is and what he/she knows is most significant for creating schemata about why the character acts as he/she does"), Staiger observes that viewers act in ways that are unpredictable (e.g., such as relating to the protagonist in terms of empathy, identification, desire, or disidentification) (33). Non-normative viewing strategies challenge the researcher's (and potentially the filmmaker's) expectations because they go as far as rehierarchizing relations between characters and genre conventions (37).

Moreover, "Viewers also project their personal, sometimes marginalized, identities into the sense data" and this, Staiger suggests, affects viewing activities (37). In such cases, a degree of unfitness occurs between text and spectator, and the viewing process is prone to discontinuities evident at all levels of analysis. At the level of text,

the film may be constructed on aesthetic principles or ideologies foreign to the spectator. For instance, Cubans in the 1960s experiencing Cuban films constructed under the aesthetic principles of the Revolution may have had a discontinuous experience if, as it was the case with most Cubans, their experience of film textuality came almost entirely from the classical Hollywood and classical Mexican film traditions. The subject positions favored by the latter may have not been available in Cuban film texts influenced by Italian neorealism. At the level of the context, the viewing process is prone to discontinuities if the history of the audience clashes with the film's representations of that history. Robert Stam and Louise Spence, commenting on cinema and racism, write that "Hollywood's ill informed portrayals of Latin-Americans were sometimes laughed off the screen within Latin America itself."[37] Finally, the viewer's activities are discontinuous when, for instance, the viewer reflectively engages the film. Christian Metz's critically positioned film viewer would likely produce just such engagement: one that tries to avoid being taken in by the film.[38]

It follows that in text-activated approaches viewership is normative when a contingent correspondence between text and spectator occurs and the subjectivity suggested by the filmic text finds a subject ready to engage the film's fictive language as fiction or non-fictive language as truth (as in documentary) or aesthetic experience (as in avant-garde film). Within these approaches, non-normative viewership is produced when spectators cannot fully engage the film's fictive language as fiction or film's non-fictive language as truth or art and, instead, experience the film as

incomplete, as a discontinuous set of significations in need of interpretation, explanation and/or completion.[39] In reader-activated theories and reception analyses normative and non-normative viewership is manifested in the set of viewing practices the spectator uses during the event of reception.

It is important to remark that while it would appear logical to propose that normative and non-normative spectatorship have specific political valences, that is not the case.[40] Viewers who stand before a film and do not engage it in the normative way are not necessarily rejecting or accepting the text's political ideology, as some have suggested. This, again, is evident at all levels of analyses. At the textual and context level, non-normative spectatorship may simply be a rejection of the text's available subject positions without this rejection being a rejection of the film's politics. Michael Chanan, writing about the first revolutionary Cuban feature (*Histories of the Revolution*, 1960, d. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea) comments that the influence of Italian neorealism and the genre of the film (a war movie) produced a non-normative viewing experience. The intense intimacy created by Neorealism "didn't combat but rather intensified the regular process of naïve audience identification" that the Cuban Film Institute (Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos, ICAIC) and the director fought against, failing to produce reflection on the events represented and the means by which they were represented.[41] At the level of reception, non-normative viewing practices used during the event of reception do not guarantee a political stance. As Annette Kuhn suggests, a political/feminist text "has no fixed formal characteristics" and therefore it has no fixed

normative set of activities, expectations, or hierarchies for reading.[42] However, as I show in Chapters 6 and 7, feminism has theorized about normative and non-normative viewing practices, and some of the latter are deemed more likely to have a political value.

Though non-normative viewership lacks a specific political valence, most filmic texts have been produced from a hegemonic stance and thus marginalized communities tend to rely, for their self-definition, on their ability to use non-normative viewing strategies and produce non-normative interpretations and meanings. Thus, most reader-activated theories (i.e., cultural studies) define film reception's *productivity* in terms of either a rejection or acceptance of hegemony, as in the case of Stuart Hall's now classical categories of decoding (originally applied to television but later often applied to film),[43] hence politicizing the meaning of the event. Proposals using this style of characterization of the event of reception as normative are quite varied and can be found in the work of John Fiske and Janice Radway, to mention a couple; nonetheless, because of the amount of commentary generated and because of the way they account for the crafting of political selves, I favor those forwarded by Elizabeth Ellsworth and Teresa de Lauretis.[44] For both theorists the film viewer has the potential to exceed or cross the boundaries of hegemony and, more importantly to my discussion, this potential is at least partly determined by (learned) interpretive strategies applied to film and to the world. Because of the way viewers relate to hegemony, it is relatively easy to observe that film viewers have positive and negative identities, and this duality is more

in accordance to the way Bourdieu and Giddens understand individuals functioning within the *habitus* and individual's agency.

According to de Lauretis and Ellsworth, critical interpretive or explanatory frameworks (i.e., feminism) generate their own patterns of spectatorship (feminist readings), and the activities of interpreting or explaining film's incompleteness are normalized within communities (feminist communities) and often fall within the realm of those communities' transformational activities. Having linked their assumption about identity to the habitus, I will briefly comment on the ways their theoretical positions can be strengthened by applying the analytical tools of technologies of the self.

Ellsworth investigates the range of potential meanings that three groups of spectators gave to the film *Personal Best* (mainstream critics, feminist critics, and lesbian feminist critics). She concluded that each of these three groups constituted discreet "interpretive communities" that experienced the film differently: the community of mainstream critics framed the film in terms of "plurality"[45]; feminist critics concentrated on ethical issues such as the film's relation to pornography and to legitimate and illegitimate sexualities (49); lesbian critics emphasized pleasurable identification with certain aspects of the film. Ellsworth comments that feminist lesbian social pleasure "requires a rejection and alteration of discourse and practices at the very center of the hegemonic bloc" and that "reviewers inflected dominant discourses with changes in meaning" (55). Her essay rightly emphasizes the social value of "performing" a technique of interpretation, a performance that in the case of lesbian

critics can be interpreted as a membership ritual. Now, that a film is always subjected to a range of interpretations as varied as the number of possible personal and communal histories needs no discussion. But that the interpretations in turn may be part of the conscious and acknowledged similarities among the members of a community and precisely one of the aspects that constitutes the interpretive community and, perhaps, a key goal of its members has been explored less frequently. Ellsworth comments that "social groups use cultural forms in the process of defining themselves" (46) and though, in this essay, she is more interested in attesting to the range and dramatic variety of interpretations, we can extrapolate and start examining the way that what I would call a *techne* of interpretation is made available to the individual who wishes to belong to the interpretive community.

Ellsworth acknowledges that the way systems of domination are experienced is something personal and somehow idiosyncratic; yet the experiences acquire a communitarian sense and are re-shaped through "consciousness raising groups, women's studies courses and feminist film reviewing" to form "interpretive strategies for making sense of these structures of feeling, moving them into the sphere of public discourse by giving social, semantic form to anxieties and desires" (46). That is, a technology for interpretation, a social and personal technique, is learned in order to give public meaning to the personal experiences of feminists. Moreover, as all learned activities, this one requires the learner's reflexive abilities. This technology, learned in consciousness-raising groups, was applied to film viewing. I argue here and in the

following chapters that this technology, that positively changes the meaning of the world and that redefines reality, belongs to a system of ethical transformation, of consciousness raising, of "theory," of learning that becomes a sign of membership to the group, and its acquisition becomes a personal goal of those interested in becoming members. For the member of the community to learn the *techne* is to re-learn to see the world. Moreover, the application of the *techne* becomes a way of performing his/her identity.

In a similar vein, de Lauretis wrote:

> If I could not but see, although I was unable to formulate it in my earlier work, that cinema and narrative theories were technologies of gender, it was not only that I had read Foucault and Althusser… but also that I had absorbed as my experience (through my own history and engagement with social reality and in the gendered spaces of feminist communities) the analytical and critical method of feminism, the practice of self-consciousness. For the understanding of one's personal conditions as a woman in terms social and political, and the constant revision, reevaluation, and reconceptualization of that condition in relation to other women's understanding of their sociosexual positions, generate a mode of apprehension of all social reality that derives from the consciousness of gender.[46]

This is both a useful theoretical foregrounding of the epistemological and political bases for her theories of gender and a blueprint of a process not uncommon to those attempting to effect political and/or cultural changes in society. It highlights the importance of self-consciousness and the necessity for the constant monitoring of the results of personal reflections. These activities are geared towards the eventual generation of "a mode of apprehension of all social reality" (20), a type of epistemic (apprehension by the mind) and sensorial (apprehension by the senses) refashioning that, interestingly, is subsequent, not prior, to comprehension. For de Lauretis, all these

steps came together to form "technologies of gender." These technologies position women at the margins of gender, simultaneously inside and outside representation; such a dual condition fuels the transformation of the gender system by providing a dialectic mechanism where positive and negative gender identities collide (10-16).

De Lauretis's ideas constitute a strong reminder of the apparent inevitable duality of the transforming subject, its reliance on theoretical "imaginings," and the processes that may be used to achieve such transformations (19). While she and Ellsworth acknowledge the ongoing processes of transformation and the necessary reliance on structures, such as the system of meanings in *Personal Best* and the gender system that produce a normativity that can be rejected, questioned, or challenged, I want to emphasize the role specific technologies of the self have in the constitution of normative and non-normative viewership. This is necessary because, though the issue of technologies is present in both their works, it is underdeveloped to the point that it is impossible to assess the way these technologies are productive or what they produce, aside subjection. In Ellsworth's work, the unique ways in which each community interpreted the film *Personal Best* are determined by material and historical conditions, yet, hailed as self-constructed.[47] Without being false, the circle normally outlining any process of mutual constitution is tight to the point of being useless, to the point of forming a circular tautology. In de Lauretis's work, gender, discourse, power, and material conditions are mutually constitutive.[48] But since she is concerned with the way gender changes, she must break the circle and does this by suggesting two things: first,

to return to a view of power as oppressive instead of the Foucaultian view of productive power (18). Such a move would allow us to understand where oppression is. And second, she suggests relying on feminism's ability to exceed the gender system and to reconstitute a consciousness at once inside and outside representation (26). Technologies of the self could possibly be used to analyze the latter strategy, but de Lauretis does not do it and instead uses technologies of gender (that include cinema) exclusively as technologies of subjection.

Readdressing the questions at the beginning of the section I will now state that, given the fact that the reflexive film viewer has the ability to reject or embrace some of the text's ideology and given that critical frameworks such as feminism insist on the self-determination of ethical life, film reception can be seen, at least in some modalities of reception, as an ethical activity. Through these, film viewers shape themselves as moral subjects to their own actions. Moreover, given that technologies of the self are embraced to perform and/or acquire an identity (for instance a feminist identity), the issue of a certain *correspondence* (or lack thereof) between the textuality of the film and the spectator's subjectivity is sidestepped, and, instead, I can characterize the spectator's subjectivity as one that acknowledges its historicity and therefore is partly alienated from it. Since political ideologies and taste systems are embedded in history, alienation due to critical interpretive and explanatory frameworks will construct patterns of spectatorship, techniques that critically look at politics and taste. As Ellsworth and de

Lauretis suggest, these *technes* may be explicit, having been taught, for instance, through consciousness-raising groups and by feminist scholarship and discourse.

By looking at the two previous general approaches to the normativity of film reception I have shown that some of film (or some film) is political, profoundly ideological, capable of subjecting or producing subjects, inspiring rebellions and motivating deviance. With Ellsworth and de Lauretis I argue that film spectatorship belongs to the everyday of many, and, though it rarely plays a significant role in the politics of its film viewers, it *participates* in their formation and transformation. Such participation is partly the function of cinema's discursivity and its propensity to constitute power structures and knowledge systems. But film also participates in the viewer's ethical and political lives because, in contemporary society, film consumption is also a way of relating to others. Given that relating to others is a social practice often regulated by ethics, film viewing has fallen within a new system of morality under which certain types of consumption and certain ways of consuming are considered proper behavior. Feminist individual or revolutionary Cubans must watch, support, and even advertise certain films. Moreover, certain readings of a film can help re-establish the individual's political identity.

In this modern definition of intersubjectivity, where one relates to the other in terms of cultural products and commerce (a notion that is in tension with Habermasian intersubjectivity), film viewing, as a consuming act and as an act of commerce, becomes part of our moral behavior that must be regulated and governed. As a general

rule, then, in certain communities, the consumption of certain cultural products has become a form of political and ethical consumption and, thus, a fundamental aspect of political and ethical life subject to monitoring and regulation.

I say this knowing that no social event or practice is fully present to the one who experiences it. The disclosing of any given object occludes things or elements of things (symbolic structures, historic determinants, unconscious desires, ideological effects). But I also recognize that consciousness exists and that it can be directed towards those objects and things understood as perceivable or thinkable, and film spectators have such options in regard to cinema. And while some aspects of the film text may remain hidden to conscious regulation, others may stand up and provide the spectator with opportunities to exercise his/her ethical dispositions by interpreting the film in a certain way, by taking pleasure only in some aspects of the film and feeling revulsion toward others, by observing himself or herself taking or rejecting pleasure and incorporating such reflection into the film's interpretation.

Returning to Foucault, I argue that film reception can be considered a technology of self when it becomes an operation geared towards the transformation of the individual in order to attain a specific type of self.[49] The revolutionary Cuban society and feminist and leftist communities in the United States certainly required that their members should try to become specific types of individuals, selves, and citizens. Members of these communities who were also cultural workers (film critics, academics, and essayists) were also expected to master specific hermeneutic techniques that would

constitute the community as a *habitus*. This is particularly clear in the Cuban case, as I will argue in chapters 3 through 5. Part of this clarity was the result of what I would call a certain discursive harmony that existed between the discourses of citizenship, individuality, and culture. Those interested in becoming cultural workers were expected to be also members of the political vanguard and, accordingly, were expected to embrace cultural policies and the theoretical definitions that could further these policies. Though contradictions and ambiguities existed, they were minimal. However, given the complex and ambiguous positions feminism and leftism occupy in the American social structure, the U.S. case is harder to make. Perhaps the most obvious reason is that feminism and leftism are discursively and theoretically constructed on the negation of hegemonic definitions of citizenry. And though their ideas may sound oppositional, they are often uttered from social locations that are not marginal. Because of these complexities, I want to discuss further citizenry and governmentality.

Citizenry

T. H. Marshall, in his famous study "Citizenship and social class," concisely defines citizenship as "full membership in a community."[50] Such status, he continues, confers individuals equal rights and duties, freedoms and constraints, powers and responsibilities (84). According to Marshall, societies where citizenship plays a developing role produce an image of an "ideal citizen", and, therefore, an archetype towards which individuals direct their aspirations. In these instances, citizenship

functions as an engine of personal and social development and is discursively constructed on the assumption that all members of a community have a reasonable opportunity to achieve the ideal of citizenship.

Supporting Marshall's central point, Toby Miller observes that contemporary societies are characterized for making citizenship an instrument of government, for instrumentalizing the gap existing between the individual and the image of the "ideal citizen." He adroitly writes: "Citizenship is an open technology, a means of transformation ready for definition and disposal in dispersed ways at dispersed sites… It produces a 'disposition' on (the citizen's) part not to accept the imposition of a particular form of government passively, but to embrace it actively as a collective expression of themselves."[51] Described in this way, citizenship is an internalized set of dispositions that legitimize and reconstitute broad social structures. Because it relies on the internalization of rules, going back to Foucault's concerns on ethics, citizenship occludes its moral nature and entices individuals to relate ethically to it. That is, citizenship produces a disposition in citizens to self-regulate and thus relies on reflexivity.

The necessity of internalizing the principles of citizenship is fundamental to societies working on consensus. This is so because different forces are constantly undermining citizenship and thus citizenship always requires maintenance. For instance, while citizenship works at homogenizing the population, other factors work at producing difference. Marshall points out that class, as it stems from capitalist systems,

stratifies society. He contends that the development of citizenship civil rights during the eighteenth century prepared the terrain for capitalism (by allowing labor to move around therefore furnishing a labor market).[52] Paradoxically, citizenship equality gave way to social stratification, class division, and heterogeneity (87). Though Marshall does not examine other stratifying forces, it is safe to say that in the United States and in Cuba the constitution of race and sex was also significant to the constitution of capitalism for they allowed for legal appropriation of the labor of non-whites and women. According to Marshall, in societies with class divisions (and I would add those with racial and sexual divisions), the reality of an "ideal citizen" is always an elusive dream, one in contradiction to capitalism.

The myth of the ideal citizen also exists in socialist Cuba and, like in capitalism, has also been an engine of development. To make citizenship work in this way, the Cuban leadership has been proactive at extending rights to previously disenfranchised classes of society like peasants, AfroCubans, and women. By doing this, the revolutionary government gained legitimacy, something particularly important during the 1960s when structures of power were relatively unstable. But besides extending rights and thus strengthening citizenship, the Cuban leadership constructed an idealized definition of citizenship under the rubric of the New Man.[53] This New Man was a citizen that supported the Revolution and that worked with the leadership to take Cuba from underdevelopment and toward communism, the only system that could eventually

grant equality to all. As I show in chapters 3 through 5, this idea of citizenry affected the cultural vanguard and has often been represented in film, literature, and song.

In the United States, class, gender, race, sexual orientation, and age have stratified society in such a way that unified ideas of citizenry are hard to come by, though a few characteristics have been hegemonic. As this narrative of capitalism goes, the ideal citizen is gendered (male), racialized (white), classed (middle class), sexualized (heterosexual), legalized (married and law abiding), and has capitalist political affiliations. Feminists and leftist individuals are clearly unfit to become these ideals citizens. However, things are more complicated.

Elaborating on the topic of citizenship and rights, Giddens argues that each type of right is linked to a type of surveillance system by the state. "Surveillance in this context consists of the apparatus of judicial and punitive organizations in terms of which 'deviant' conduct is controlled" and is at once monitoring and constituting the boundaries of citizenship.[54] According to Giddens, class conflict and social movements in Western societies are struggles about the nature and application of civil rights and about the definition of citizenship. Because of these agonistic processes, the boundaries of citizenship at the group level are redrawn continuously and monitored in different ways. In these contexts, the constitution of the boundaries appears more ephemeral, less ready to be idealized. While Marshall's ideal citizenship works as an exemplar that individuals may use to model their behavior, with Giddens, I argue that social movements like feminism and the left are constructed on a negation of hegemonic

citizenship. The implications are many, for in these circumstances, to achieve more rights groups must renounce culturally established ideas of citizenship and therefore renounce the rights that hegemonic citizenship confers.

The different levels at which the individual may relate to citizenship are part of what Foucault calls "the art of government" or "governmentality." According to him, the preoccupation with an art of government marked the development in the West of the modern liberal nation-state. The key concerns of the art of government are summarized by Foucault in the following: governmentality tries to answer the issues of "[how] to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor."[55] Citizenship answers all of these questions. First, as Miller suggests, citizenship gives individuals a way of governing themselves. Because it is bound to rights, and rights are bound to surveillance, citizenship is also a way of governing a population (as Giddens suggests). Second, as most agree, citizenship is a way of governing others. Third, as United States history attests, citizenship also helps establish the type of person who can govern (it is no coincidence that a woman or a non-white are weak choices for presidential nominations). And fourth, citizenship helps establish how to become the best possible governor, for it establishes an ideal that most subjects recognize. In Cuba, for instance, the political vanguard needed to claim they embodied the principles of the New Man or at least that they were striving to go there.

Although intimately linked to social practices, citizenship is fundamentally an ideological and discursive construct that is sustained by culture. Miller suggests that it is culture that teaches individuals how to become citizens.[56] This is done not simply by rules of *politesse*, but also by the powerful role cultural texts play in the formation of subjects. Miller contends that the "reading subject and his or her proper education will be geared to positioning the self inside the text in order to know it better" (51), therefore engaging it in the text's "realist" ethical dilemmas and issues of legitimization. This is not simply an exercise in docility: the reader is also socialized to wrestle with the text and to bring non-fictive knowledges to bear on the text's realism. Similarly, though talking only about gender realism, de Lauretis forwards the notion of a politically gendered subject "at the same time inside and outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that two-fold pull, of that division, that doubled vision."[57] The docile citizen is not the only type of citizen nor are all readers polite. Impolite readers bring to task the realism of the text by thinking themselves into and out of texts, by holding a double vision that shares ideology and at the same time objectifies it. Impolite readers wrestle the text by monitoring their positions in the social grid.

Not all impolite readers are bad citizens, nor do all images of ideal citizenship include polite readers. Feminism and Marxism, for instance, often understand subjectivity as a paradoxical mixture of positive and negative identities. To be a feminist is a paradox because being a feminist requires first to be a woman or man within patriarchy, identities that preclude the subject from the option to rebel. Speaking

from the point of view of citizenship, a feminist person is always incomplete and uses his/her ability to engage texts impolitely to broaden the base on which his or her sense of unity rests. Similarly Marxists (and almost all other leftist identities) understand that their identities are partly based on domination and thus they are incapable of true equality. Both groups, interestingly, make use of their ability to interpret texts against the grain as technologies aimed to unify ethical concerns in one single substance and thus help constitute community.

As it is clear by now, the relationship of governmentality to citizenship in Cuban official circles is quite different from the previous examples. While in Cuba cultural workers were linked to power and often embraced hermeneutic techniques that made them "polite readers," feminist and leftists critics, even while working in mass media, often interpreted in an impolite fashion. Given this, is it even possible to link governmentality to these non-hegemonic styles of citizenship? In the following section I explore the potential uses of governmentality to talk about feminist and leftist identities and cultural products.

Governmentality

As previously mentioned, Foucault used the concept of governmentality in reference to governance from the top (a traditional use of governance). He wrote about the type of leader people would follow (a standard question of electoral politics). He reflected on self-government and argued that learning to govern oneself was a condition

governors needed to fulfil in order to become proper governors (a non-traditional way of highlighting the disciplining involved in becoming a good ruler).[58] In all of these cases, the leadership, by the top echelon of society, executes governance. Understood in this way, governmentality is perfectly applicable to the Cuban case study. In the case I will be investigating the ways the cultural vanguard attempted to use culture was as governance for selves and others. The vanguard was, to a great degree, part of the leadership and, like the leadership, was interested in becoming proper governors and also in governing efficiently. However, given that feminist and leftist critics are hardly representatives of the ruling power, governmentality in the U.S. context has to be rethought.

Profiting from Bourdieu's and Gidden's ideas regarding the way social systems function and the role agents have in their structuring, I am interested in expanding the use of governmentality to accommodate those actions from people not at the top that result in changes to policies, laws, and social or cultural arrangements. Without denying the power of typical governmental structures, I argue that the radical citizen (including typical feminists and leftist individuals) is engaged in governance insofar as she/he attempts to use power to (re)constitute the material, social, and political realities affecting others. The radical citizen occupies positions of contingent freedom from which she/he can objectify her/his *habitus* and seek out change. As commented before, I understand that no individual can fully objectify the *habitus* or society; the fact remains that reflection on the social, as de Lauretis argues, generates a new social location, a

new epistemological and ontological position from which self and society acquire new meaning. Given the systemic nature of the social, a new location implies a change in the whole system.

This expansion of the notion of governmentality allows me to hypothesize that, much in the same way that, according to Foucault, the "art of government" requires the production of knowledges, working from the margins of hegemony also requires the development of specific knowledges. With these, the radical citizen learns about how to go on governing when his/her position is one of shifting marginality.

While typical forms of government have constituted knowledge sets that can generate the conditions for government by, and maintenance of, the hegemony, including politics, much of the social sciences, art, philosophy, economics, military science, and pedagogy (and I will show some of these knowledge sets in the Cuban case), anyone or any group wanting to govern from the margins (or at least not the center) must engage in the production of new knowledges that can generate a different set of conditions for government. Supporting my argument are the academic and cultural revolutions of the last decades. For instance, at the level of formal knowledge, marginal individuals and groups have forced a radical rewriting of the academic canon and a shift in direction of the social sciences, the humanities, and also the hard sciences.[59] Moreover, other types of knowledge have been required in order to muster the power needed to affect broad social structures from a localized and minority position. Feminist critiques of politics, studies of communities, and epistemological

proposals have played that role. But also more practical knowledges such as social movement accounts are part of a growing body concerned with the issue of governance from the margins. Echoing Foucault, radical feminists and community leaders are not only interested in how to govern from the margins, but *who* can govern from the margins. As Machiavelli did centuries back, feminists and leftists have attempted to codify how to identify a good leader and, when no one could be found, they have suggested how to produce leaders.[60]

With the issue of hegemony inverted, that is, without being able to count on national consensus, or without being able to count on economic, military, or cultural hegemony, governing from the margins is fundamentally different from simply governing. But some of the same matters that Foucault identified in governmentality can be applied to illustrate the particulars of the task. First, Foucault proposes several levels of government including "the art of self-government, connected with morality; the art of properly governing the family, which belongs to economy; and finally the science of ruling the state, which concerns politics."[61] And second, he underlines several fundamental problematics of government including: "How to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor" (87).

In relation to the levels of government, feminism and the left have laid down rules for how to govern oneself, how to constitute a community, and how to affect the hegemonic structures. Through consciousness-raising groups and other cultural forms,

these social movements established ways of self-governance and the ideological and discursive means for becoming a community. In addition, these two ways of being political produced knowledges that question ways of government and definitions of citizenship. These knowledges include, as I discuss in Chapter 6, issues of hermeneutics and interpretation, which made these two types of social practices key for governance from the margins.

Conclusion

This project addresses very specific types of film reception found in communities in a process of redefinition. In these communities, culture plays a complex role for it allows members of the communities to use cultural consumption in order to define themselves apart from mainstream society. The activity of defining oneself through culture has been of interest to cultural studies researchers for awhile. However, my questions have to do with cultural workers who function in institutional settings; thus, I needed to talk about agency and change within institutions.

As I showed, cultural institutions can be theorized as constituting a field that behaves similarly to a social system. Bourdieu calls this theoretical construct "the field of cultural production." The cultural field is held together by structural relations between its sub-fields (e.g., criticism, film production) and by a *habitus*. The *habitus* organizes social and symbolic practices within the field. According to Giddens, the rules of the field are instantiated with every action and, accordingly, in acting, workers

reconstitute themselves and the material conditions of the field. This field changes partly because the *habitus* produces the disposition in cultural workers to reflect on their cultural and political locations.

Given that interpreting film is one activity carried on within the cultural field, I argued that it is subject to similar determinations. That is, film interpretation structures the field by reconstituting the interpreter's position within the field and her/his relation to the field of power. Moreover, the cultural worker may reflect on the techniques of interpretation or use them to reflect on larger issues, such as politics.

Given that technologies of the self help individuals address issues of personal identity, community, and personal freedom, these technologies are particularly useful for understanding processes of self-formation in relation to institutions. Simply speaking, technologies help individuals construct themselves using socially bounded ideas of self-hood and freedom. In the case of cultural workers or politicized individuals, technologies of selfhood may be used to interpret cultural works in ways that reassert the political identity of the interpreter. Using feminist communities, I showed how interpretation was a way of articulating the individual sense of selfhood and a way of articulating her relationship to a larger political community.

Given that interpretation of political texts may be seen as a political activity geared toward the shaping of the self and others, it also is a type of governmentality. That is, interpretation of cultural texts can be used as a way of self-governance and as a way of enacting social power on others. Moreover, since technologies of self are

eminently ethical and civic, they can be seen as related to citizenship and thus as having a strong relation to the acquisition of, or struggle over, rights.

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[1] Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 8.

[2] In what follows, unless stated, freedom will refer to an individual's ability to exercise limited agency, chose among limited choices, and to conceive of her/his actions in terms of contingent definitions of freedom and individuality. This is a freedom with a small "f," contingent but reachable.

[3] Randal Johnson, "Editor's Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 15.

[4] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press., 1993), 125.

[5] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 17.

[6] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990 [1980]), 41.

[7] Though Giddens highlights agency as a central feature of social life, his work often overemphasizes the recursive power of structures and agency by default. Evidence to this is talking about agency in terms of the "unintended consequences of action." Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 56.

[8] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[9] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.

[10] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society,* 2.

[11] Simon During criticizes an early strand of cultural studies that too quickly celebrated popular culture. Using an essay by John Fiske as an example, During observes some of the ways in which Stuart Hall's classical distinction between "preferred," "negotiated," and "oppositional" readings lent themselves to categorizing cultural consumption of minorities and subcultures as politically oppositional. He argues that this approach leaves open too many questions regarding the processes of hegemony popular culture inhabits. Simon During, "Introduction," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1993), 17-18.

[12] Giddens makes the distinction between three types of knowledgeability. "Discursive consciousness" is knowledge about social actions, their consequences, and their legitimation. *The Constitution of Society*, 374. "Practical consciousness" guides individuals in social situations, yet, it cannot be discursively instantiated. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 56; Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 4, 53.

[13] I use this terminology because Giddens uses it.

[14] Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 55.

[15] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 41.

[16] "The *habitus* is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application--beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt--of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions" (170).

[17] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 86.

[18] Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 96.

[19] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 33.

[20] Johnson, "Editor's Introduction," 11.

[21] Rux Martin, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Technologies of the Self*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 10.

[22] Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self* [1984] translated by Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality*, 3 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* [1984], translated by Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality*, 2 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985).

[23] Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *The Final Foucault*, ed. J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (Cambridge, Massachusetts.: MIT Press, 1988), 18.

[24] Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1992), 59.

[25] Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 50.

[26] McNay, *Foucault and Feminism*, 48-49.

[27] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87.

[28] Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," 19.

[29] The point is not that the ethical will give the individual the right or power to govern others; rather, Foucault is concerned with practices that individuals must endure or embrace to have the proper stylistics (way of being ethical) to govern, even before being in the position to govern (Greek society), or already in that position (monarchic society).

[30] From here on viewing will be all the activities associated with it. See also chap. 1, n. 2.

[31] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 56.

[32] Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 43-47.

[33] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 352.

[34] For a revision of these proposals, see Elizabeth Cowie, *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[35] Roughly speaking, film theory before 1970 was interested in aesthetics and after 1970 in ethics. Although film theory prior to the 1970s manifested a theoretical tendency to investigate the film medium in terms of its aesthetic characteristics, some of the most notable exceptions, those that showed a profound political investment, came about as a result of World War II. Because of their influence to film and cultural theory in general, it is worth mentioning the works by Walter Benjamin, particularly his famous "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligary to Hitler*. See the introduction to *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1992), x. That said, the social upheavals of 1968 around the world produced a shift in the study of film and brought forward new theoretical considerations. Of relevance were those considerations influenced by the writings of Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser and those found in the French journal *Tel Quel*. In general, these theoretical innovations brought with them a sophisticated theoretical arsenal aimed to facilitate the investigation of the relationships of film to the political establishment in general, and the relationship of film to domination and/or

emancipation. Althussurian theories of ideology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and French structuralism became the foundations for the study of classical cinema and avant garde experimental film, the former treated as an overpowering cultural institution invested in the reproduction of domination (the cinematic apparatus), the latter as a modernist solution capable of disarticulating the cultural establishment. D.N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 1-41. The all-oppressing character of the cinematic apparatus of 1970s film theory was challenged during the 1980s and 1990s by those interested in discussing the possibility for social transformation. The challenge was not rooted simply on theoretical considerations, though the rise and popularity of French poststructuralism brought with it a fundamental revision of theories of the cinematic apparatus and other theories rooted on structuralist principles. The challenge was also furnished by the diverse concerns of peoples belonging to new social, political, and economic formations. Feminists, queers, lesbians, racialized and ethnic communities (to mention some) converged with postcolonial, separatist, multinational political movements to give voice to an identity politics often puzzled by the complexities of the new economic order. Monopoly capitalism and globalization have brought very particular types of havoc to emancipatory projects

within nations and around the world and has made it necessary to rewrite the "rules" of domination.

[36] Staiger, *Perverse Spectators*, 28-41.

[37] Robert Stam and Louise Spence, "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation: An Introduction," in *Movies and Methods: Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 646.

[38] See Chapter 1.

[39] See Michael Brake, *Comparative Youth Subculture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada* (London: Routledge, 1990), 8; Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1987), 4-7.

[40] Staiger, *Perverse Spectators*, 32.

[41] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image: Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 113.

[42] Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (New York: Verso, 1993), 13.

[43] Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1993), 100-103.

[44] John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Illicit Pleasures: Feminist Spectators and *Personal Best*," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 2 (1986): 45-56; Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[45] Ellsworth, "Illicit Pleasures," 52.

[46] de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, 20.

[47] Ellsworth, "Illicit Pleasures," 46.

[48] De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, 16.

[49] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

[50] T.H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class," in *Class, Citizenship and Social Developments*, ed. T.H. Marshall (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), 70.

[51] Toby Miller, *The Well Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 12.

[52] Marshall distinguishes between three types of rights: civil rights are "rights necessary for individual freedom," including speech, thought and faith, property, and judicial equality. "Political rights" refers to those that allow the individual the possibility of participating in politics. "Social rights" include welfare, security, and "the right to live the life of a civilized being a according to the standards prevailing in society." "Citizenship and Social Class," 71-72.

[53] Other ways of referring to this ideal state of citizenship have been: being a "revolutionary citizen," "becoming like Che." See also Chapter 5.

[54] Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 205.

[55] Foucault, "Governmentality," 87.

[56] Miller, *The Well Tempered Self*, 17.

[57] De Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, 10.

[58] Foucault, "Governmentality," 89-105.

[59] Regarding the influence of activism in the hard sciences, one must remember that shifts on biology, zoology, genetics, and medicine have been the product of the social pressures of marginal groups such as environmental groups,

racial minorities (race and genetics), and women (for example, breast cancer research).

[60] See for instance Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971). In this book, Alinsky, a famous social organizer since the 1940s, laid down rules on how to become the ideal radical leader.

[61] Foucault, "Governmentality," 91.

3

Cuban Culture, Institutions, Policies, and People

In 1955, Italian neorealism entered full force in the political culture of Cuba. In that year, the young filmmaker Julio García Espinosa directed *El Megano*, a documentary that denounced the living conditions of charcoal burners in the Zapata Swamps region. The film gained immediate fame when Cuba's president, Fulgencio Batista, decided to seize it right after its first showing at the University of Havana. García was interrogated and set free only when he promised to bring the film to the authorities. Surrounded by a strong and independent filmmaking community organized around Nuestro Tiempo (a social and artistic group that organized cine-clubs, film retrospectives, and a cultural magazine) and that included Alfredo Guevara, José Massip, Santiago Alvarez, and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, García managed to make quickly a copy and take one print to the police.[1]

Like Gutiérrez, García had studied film in Italy in the renowned Centro Sperimentale di Roma where he learned the neorealist style and the relationship of politics and art from a Marxist perspective. His way of seeing filmmaking was common among a type of intelligentsia that around the world and within Cuba had grown distant from the politics of market capital and its system of intranational and international domination and was increasingly attracted to a variety of Marxisms and socialisms.[2] From these intellectual, social, cultural, and political contexts, the first wave of

revolutionary cultural workers would emerge, albeit in a very nationally specific way. What gave cultural specificity to this wave of post-revolutionary intellectuals and their ideas about film, art, and literature was the history of Cuba's political culture and the unusual set of circumstances that surrounded Cuba's transition to socialism/communism from capitalism.[3]

The goal of this chapter is to historicize the relationships between Cuba's cultural transformations since the Revolution, cultural institutions, and Cuban intellectuals. These relationships serve as contexts to the events of film production and film reception that will be investigated in the following chapters. My account brings together historical evidence on political and cultural changes, cultural policy, intellectual debates on culture, and the theoretical considerations discussed in Chapter 2, in particular the concept of a field of cultural production (or cultural field) and *habitus*. In what follows, I examine how structural properties of the field of culture develop alongside ways of thinking about culture. My argument is that official Cuban ideas about culture constituted aesthetic and hermeneutic frameworks that cultural intellectuals used to interpret, evaluate, and understand cultural texts including cinema.

Given that the production of the first of these films began in the mid-1960s with the production of *Lucia* and *Memories of Underdevelopment*, and that the last of these occurred in 1983 with the reception of *Up to a Certain Point*, the contexts must span from the beginning of the Revolution to the 1980s. This period of Cuban cultural history is particularly important because it includes two key époques in the

transformation of Cuban society and culture. From 1959 to 1970, the Cuban cultural milieu experimented with a fast pace of change and development that can be interpreted as a cultural revolution. During this time, high idealism and the dream of communism marked a process in which culture became increasingly politicized and used to effect social change in Cuban society. From 1970 to 1985, a more somber époque, the Cuban cultural milieu became increasingly institutionalized and centralized, invested in the realities of Soviet style socialism. Though the chapter briefly touches on historic, economic, political, and social contexts, I center on the cultural aspects and try to understand cultural institutions in terms of the communities of individuals that comprise them. In particular, I explore the ways in which Cuban cultural workers became a community with a *habitus* shaped around certain internally and externally imposed principles and the manner in which these principles guided their actions, defined cultural policies, and structured institutional activities. The largest external pressures came from what I refer to, borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu, as the field of power, which in Cuba included the central government, particularly Fidel Castro, and the Cuban Communist Party (Partido Comunista Cubano, PCC). The internal pressures had to do with conflicting cultural traditions and the necessity to fulfill general goals that were quite ambitious, such as the development of *conciencia* (the term roughly translates as social consciousness that motivates social action) in the general population. I hypothesize that the Cuban cultural workers embraced a revolutionary hermeneutics that could help them negotiate these and other internal and external pressures. This

revolutionary hermeneutics attempted to apply Marxist aesthetic principles to cultural production and evaluation as ways of responding to the, at times, contradictory requirements of the revolutionary government and to already existing cultural traditions.

Before continuing, I wish to point out that much of the scholarship about the Cuban culture field has centered on the issues of freedom of expression, artists' and writers' rights, and censorship. Seymour Menton, for instance, included in his study of revolutionary Cuban literature a chapter dedicated to outlining the development of the literary field in terms of the boundaries created by cultural policy. Like most researchers analyzing Cuban culture, he illustrated his points using two cases of censorship (the case of *P.M.* and the Padilla case) to comment on the way the Castroist government and cultural institutions limited expression in Cuba.[4] Similarly, others like Antonio Benítez Rojo, Georgina Dopico Black, Liliana Martínez Pérez, Roger Reed, and Carlos Ripoll have commented on the way cultural policies, censorship, and repression had characterized the Cuban cultural field since the Revolution.[5] Without denying the academic and humanistic value of these research enterprises, I have to state that my goals are different from their goals and that my own understanding of censorship, freedom of expression, and artists' and writers' rights is non-essentialist and tries to account for the contingencies of history.[6]

For instance, while Ripoll can unabashedly start his compelling monograph on freedom of expression in Cuba with the idea that "The Cuban government, like all other totalitarian regimes, does not recognize individual rights, only the rights of the State"

(1), I cannot. Ripoll's key arguments, optimistically, rest on the assumption that in some nations individual rights supersede those of state—a position that I cannot embrace. It is my belief that the rights of the state supersede those of the individuals in most, if not all, states. Yet, specific ideologies, such as capitalism or anti-communism, occlude this reality. Moreover, he argues that in Cuba individual rights do not exist, something I know is untrue. Individual rights in Cuba, including freedom of expression, exist, albeit in historically and culturally specific ways (just like in all other nations). It is my experience that speech and the ability of filmmakers, writers, and artists to exercise their professions are limited by different social, political, and economic structures in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, nations in which I have lived and have researched media issues. From lack of funding for artists and writers, media oligopolies, political pressures on journalists, disregard for the speech and cultural work coming from racial and gender minorities, to capitalist-cultural pressures on filmmakers, artists, and writers, these cultural activities are bounded in so-called democratic capitalist nations. Given these things, I do not find it scandalous that in Cuba cultural activities are also bounded. Thus, I am not interested in demonizing the Cuban system of cultural policing, something that some researchers have taken as their key goal. Instead, I am interested in understanding the way cultural activity in Cuba has continued, some may even say thrived, under the Revolution.

Moreover, I understand that actors motivated by historically specific reasons undertake cultural activities. While some of the reasons for actions may not be

conscious, the important emphasis the Revolution placed on the construction of the New Man, which translated an emphasis on the crafting of a proper public self, suggests that being able to justify actions and decisions based on revolutionary morality often determined the likelihood of actions. As argued in Chapter 2, reflection is a common requirement for achieving selfhood. In what follows, while I will not try to assume actions have been motivated solely by theoretical, administrative, or political principles, I will however assume that cultural workers often used these principles to legitimize their actions and that this "style" of being public afforded them a proper stylistics of public selfhood. Moreover, since these ways of rationalizing social actions became organized sets of knowledges, following Michel Foucault, I will understand these knowledges and these actions as comprising technologies of public selfhood that historically-situated individuals used in Cuba to become good citizens to the eyes of government, of society, and of themselves.

The chapter is organized chronologically around a number of events that determined Cuban cultural life which I roughly split into four periods: pre-revolutionary Cuba and anti-imperialism; 1959-1961, the beginning years of the Revolution; 1961-1970, cultural experimentation and idealism; 1970-1985, institutionalization and socialism. Within these different time periods I link Cuba's history to the community of Cuban cultural workers or to normative ideas about cultural workers. By cultural workers I am referring to designers, editors, journalists, artists, writers, filmmakers, and academics. Included among the intellectuals are cultural critics, film critics, film

academics, and filmmakers, all of whom are the actual subject of the following chapter.[7] This strategy allows me to link the institutions of filmmaking and cultural criticism to the larger category of cultural and ideological institutions.[8]

The Cultural Vanguard and the Politicization of Cuba

Cuba's struggle to build an independent nation shaped the experience of being an intellectual in Cuba before the Revolution. From Spanish colony to de facto American colony, Cuba's revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth century set an anti-imperialist tone that many intellectuals embraced. Much of the anti-imperialist basis of the Revolution was in response to the tense relationship Cuba had with the United States since the nineteenth century.[9] Marking the relationship was the American occupation of Cuba from 1898 to 1902 that resulted in the eventual institution of the Platt Amendment. Since then, and throughout the first half of the century, Cubans had to endure the bullying presence of the United States in Cuba's economic, social, political, and cultural affairs. The necessity to fend off their influence, invasions, military pressures, and economic coercions engendered a modernity based on the tension between a pro-American oligarchy and a counter-hegemonic intellectual and popular base that defined itself, and its *habitus*, in terms of radicalization, anti-imperialism, and, as the century advanced, socialism. The fall of General Fulgencio Batista in 1958 gave the opportunity to political dissidents, intellectuals, and a young

leadership to put into practice some of the ideas and ideals that had been conceived over years of political dissolution and/or coercion.

1959-1961: The Beginning of a Cultural Revolution

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, began a phase of intense nationalism and radical populism that ended with the failed invasion, on April 17, 1961, of the Bay of Pigs by 1500 exiles sponsored by the CIA. [10] During these important months, the Cuban leadership set the basis for future social, political, and economic transformations. The regime established an agrarian policy that expropriated North American property and subsidized the cost of medicine, electricity, telephone, and rents. They tried to establish trade relations with, among others, Japan, Egypt, India, and the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, with the U.S. government-sponsored attacks multiplying during 1960 and 1961, the Cuban leadership could do little to stop the polarization of Cuban society as well as its catalization. In fact, the Cuban leadership gained strength and popular support thanks to the violent events of these years and consolidated its nationalist, liberatory, and anti-imperialist character. This period culminated on April 16, 1961, with the failed the Bay of Pigs's invasion. On the eve of the invasion Fidel Castro declared the socialist character of the revolution.

The changes engendered by the Revolution included a radical restructuring of the field of culture. Some of the principles that would govern this restructuring, particularly those affecting intellectuals, were developed and instituted during the months that

followed the triumph of the Revolution. One such principle was the reliance on already existing revolutionary cultural cliques to organize early cultural activities. Within these groups, leadership was given to those who either had participated in the guerrilla movement or who had been part of the communist parties in the past. Filmmakers who had been organized around Nuestro Tiempo, for instance, became central to the Cuban film institute. Guevara became its leader and other members of Nuestro Tiempo such as Massip, Alvarez, Gutiérrez, and García, became central figures. Carlos Franqui, a revolutionary who organized the radical newspaper *Revolución* in 1956, was given power and resources to turn the radical paper into the official newspaper of the revolutionary government. Gutiérrez, Alvarez, García, and Massip were given funds and institutional support to make films.[11] Alejo Carpentier, the important novelist, was given the reins of the Dirección de Cultura. Haydée Santamaría, wife of the minister of education at the time, Armando Hart, and part of the 26th of July Movement that attacked the Moncada barracks in 1953, became the head of Casa de las Américas.[12] Nicolas Guillén, a laureate poet and member since the 1920s of the communist party, was elected president of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, UNEAC) in 1961. Given the fact that no ministry of culture existed during the first decade and a half of the Revolution, all of these institutions (together with a handful more) became key to the cultural formation of the new Cuba.

Conversely, those who did not belong to revolutionary cliques, and belonged to cultural organizations and corporations that worked alongside the Batista regime, were

often removed from the revolutionary cultural field. For instance, a purge in 1959 of non-Castroist professors in Universidad de la Habana replaced nearly eighty percent of the old faculty with new professors who supported the new leadership.[13] During the 1959 and 1960, some dailies (e.g., *Alerta*, *Pueblo*, *Ataja*, *Prensa Libre*, and *Diario de la Marina*), Radio Mambi, the Telemundo television network, and the magazines *Bohemia* and *Carteles* were either closed or nationalized, which meant that their editorial staffs were fired, intellectuals and technicians supportive of the government took over the installations, and the Republic of Cuba assumed ownership (46-62).

The constitution of the field, which implied the normalization of a *habitus*, structured intellectual life and, of necessity, intellectual approaches to culture. For instance, though many intellectuals supported the Revolution, and some that became part of the new key institutions knew each other fairly well, divisions among intellectuals that existed before 1959 were recreated in the new cultural milieu. Dissension due to this emerged from the beginning of the Revolution. Notably, Franqui, who did not favor those communists who had not participated in the armed struggle, openly disliked Guevara, the directory of the Cuban Film Institute (Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos, ICAIC). Franqui had put himself at risk organizing *Revolución* in 1956 as an underground paper that gave voice to the radical revolutionary guerrilla 26th of July Movement. The newspaper became, after the triumph of the Revolution, the most important newspaper in Cuba and an institution antagonistic to the film institute headed by Guevara.[14] This newspaper produced *Lunes de Revolución*, a

cultural supplement published every Monday by a group of intellectuals who, like Heberto Padilla, Pablo Armando Fernández, Edith García Buchacha, Sabá Cabrera Infante, and Guillermo Cabrera Infante, understood the Revolution as an opportunity for intellectual expansion, freedom of expression, and formal experimentation.[15] Until its dissolution in 1961, *Lunes*, with a circulation that reached almost 200,000 copies, printed articles on Marxism, leftist classics, Cuban history, the writings of Castro and Guevara, and a wide array of articles about art. Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir had been so impressed by the magazine that they commented, in their visits to Cuba, that they had found ordinary Cubans more knowledgeable about avant-garde art than a good many Frenchmen (128). In a sense, the intellectual wealth that *Lunes*, the publication, represented shared the same faith that Lunes, the cultural organization and its members, suffered. I expand on this later, but suffice to say that the value of cultural experimentation was, after *Lunes*'s disappearance, de-prioritized within the cultural field.

In 1959 and 1960 intellectuals continued organizing around social groups that existed before the Revolution. This brought some normalization to the way activities were carried on within the bourgeoning institutions. Within these groups, as within government, it was then common to emphasize action and criticize theory. This was partly the result of the highly pragmatic tone that all revolutionary activities of the time showed. Without roadmaps to follow and with a large number of members of government and administrators of institutions gone, the new government needed,

nonetheless, to take action, to organize. Pragmatism was required to carry on governmental activities even if this meant that those in charge would have to improvise. The same applied to cultural institutions. Because many of the intellectuals, who were high-ranking officials in Batista's cultural institutions, migrated away or were segregated by the new government, an administrative vacuum appeared during these months (that continued all throughout the 1960s).[16] Instead of experienced cultural bureaucrats (however paradoxical the term may be), the revolutionary government counted on groups of intellectuals that were knowledgeable about production but had little or no experience in cultural administration, particularly at the national and regional levels. This notwithstanding, these groups had to carry on cultural activities and organize cultural institutions based on their ability to "do" and not necessarily on their ability to plan, administer, budget, and/or promote.

In addition to the practical reasons that made action more important than theory within the cultural *habitus*, the leadership supported the approach with theoretical arguments coming from Marxism. For instance, Ernesto Che Guevara, the influential Argentinian physician and co-leader of the guerrilla, had expressed his ideas about "action" on October 8, 1960, in an essay published in *Verde Olivo* (the journal of the armed forces). In it, Guevara stated that the Cuban Revolution was Marxist independently of whether its leaders recognized it or not.[17] Like any revolution, this meant that the Cuban experience was based on a deep knowledge of reality not only on theoretical postulates. Like any Marxist revolution, he argued, this also meant that the

knowledge and lived experience of the peasantry were more important than the ideas and theories of the intellectuals. Indeed, stating a conviction on the transformative power of lived experience, he maintained that the virtues of the peasants transformed the revolutionary intellectuals living in the Sierra Maestra as guerrillas.[18] Knowledge of the peasants' needs transformed the intellectual's ideas, and not vice versa. Such was the power of lived experience (19).

During the following decades, the virtues of action and lived experience remained central in Cuban intellectual circles despite the fact that these virtues were often supported by reference to theory.[19] Also long lasting were the repercussions of organizing early cultural activities based on existing groups. This way of organizing intellectuals shaped the ideological tone of cultural institutions for years to come. It did so by eliminating non-revolutionary voices from the cultural field, by turning personal antagonisms into institutional divisions, pitting ICAIC against *Revolución* and, as I elaborate later, reproducing age-old aesthetic debates about the emancipatory power of culture. Moreover, emphasizing action over theory was an idea applied to the administration of institutions that also helped to determine some of the proper ways to engage in aesthetic exploration. These early organizational principles affected the development of the community of cultural workers and the policies they fostered during the 1960s and 1970s.

With the formation of cultural institutions also began the institution of cultural policies and their effect on the cultural *habitus*. Cultural policy was written to regulate

early cultural organizations, in particular ICAIC, which was the first cultural institution to be organized by the revolutionary government. The first cultural policy after the triumph of the Revolution was Law 169 of the Council of Ministers of the Cuban Republic (Ley No. 169 del Consejo de Ministros de la República de Cuba), issued March 24, 1959, which established ICAIC.[20] According to this legislation, ICAIC would control filmic production and distribution in internal and external markets, prepare technicians and filmmakers, and administer studios, laboratories, and any other infrastructure related to film production and distribution. The harnessing of all of these administrative, regulatory, educative, and promotional activities under one institution attempted to regulate what was perceived to be the most powerful ideological tool of its time: film.

Beside laying down administrative roles for ICAIC, which has structured the cultural sub-field of cinema to this day, Law 169 set a discursive primer for thinking about film and art (indeed, the ideas of this law would affect most cultural work) in revolutionary Cuba. The law states: "Because film is an art. Because cinema constitutes, due to its characteristics, an instrument of opinions that forms individual and collective consciousness and can contribute to deepen and purify the revolutionary spirit and sustain its creative impulse" (7). Later, the law states that film must remain free from the coercion of the market and achieve its potential as a tool of education, reason, and national pride. This law had profound effects on the *habitus* of the cultural field for it established cinema as a set of activities (acting, scripting, directing, promoting, and

reviewing) of extreme social and political importance. Reasonably, those involved in cinema, and culture, would have to take cinema's importance in consideration and reflect on its social and political potential.

Law 169, issued only three months after the triumph of the Revolution, introduced four areas of debate that became central to cultural reflection in the following decades: 1) What is the role of the intellectual in a Communist/socialist society? According to Law 169, the role of the intellectual was to educate the people using film's ideological potential. This question engendered debates about the relation of the intellectual to the Revolution, the relationship between the artist and his/her work, and the definition of intellectual labor in relation to revolutionary praxis. 2) What works can be considered revolutionary film, literature, or art? According to Law 169, revolutionary cultural work should be able to transform collective consciousness and deepen the revolutionary spirit. Any work deemed incapable of doing either could not be considered revolutionary work. 3) What are the proper objects of filmic and artistic reflection? These objects would be those that have the potential to educate the people. To implement this idea, it would be necessary to define education and to specify which aspects of the people could transform culture. In addition, it became necessary to find ways to use culture to educate; that is, to establish a pedagogy based on aesthetics (these principles and ideas are discussed in Chapter 4). The issues Law 169 made relevant suggest that the writers of this law were more than merely acquainted with modernist aesthetics, and, as I will show later in this chapter, that cultural debates in Cuba were

largely centered around Marxian thought even before the official embracing of socialism in 1961. I shall discuss below a further area of debate which is 4) the proper policing of culture.

A cultural field, like Bourdieu argues about the French field of cultural production, depends on aesthetic ideas that can help explain, legitimate, and value actions within the field and give distinction to those that embody them. In this, the Cuban cultural field resembled the French. Indeed, developing socialist/communist aesthetic ideas was a task that cultural leaders took early on with great conviction. This was already evidenced in Law 169 but also in the immediate aesthetic turn taken by cultural magazines such as *Cine Cubano* and *Casa de las Américas* (*Casa* from here on) both initiated in 1960. Though *Cine Cubano* carried essays about filmic technique and film reviews, each number introduced new and complex ideas about filmic aesthetics, most of these under the general umbrella of Marxist aesthetics.[21] Highly theoretical interviews with directors like Joris Ivens, Chris Marker, Tony Richardson, and Agnès Vajda, to mention some, during the first five years, were supported with essays about Bertolt Brecht, Georg Lukács, Sergei Eisenstein, Gutiérrez, and, ICAIC's director and Chief Editor of the journal, Guevara. Similarly, *Casa*, which was created with the goal of showcasing revolutionary literature, effectively hosted ongoing debates about revolutionary aesthetics that included essays on Marxist aesthetics, Brecht, Lukács, Paul Baran, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Louis Althusser, Frantz Fanon, and Lucien Goldmann, to name a few.

Given the multiple roles that cultural institutions played in Cuba, stressing thinking about aesthetics is not surprising. A proper aesthetics was required to discriminate, or legitimize the discrimination, among works. An aesthetics would be used when it came time to select which films would be produced, which books would be published and promoted, which painters would be exhibited, which plays would be performed.[22] Moreover, embodying the "right" aesthetics gave the cultural worker distinction. The complexity of issues of aesthetics, however, merits its own discussion and is undertaken in Chapter 4.

The issue of how to police culture, which was the inverted side to a positive presentation of aesthetic values, was addressed full force later in 1961 in relation to *P.M.*, a short film that was censored, and amidst the turmoil caused by the Bay of Pigs. The area of debate was, again, film. The delay between the triumph of the Revolution and the policing of cultural boundaries has something to do with the fact that in order to police anything, it was necessary to know what to police and to have developed a history, however brief, of the permissible. How could one know when an intellectual was neglecting his/her role in society? Was it the case that the evidence of wrongdoing could be found in the cultural work itself? What were the signs of bad behavior? How could one deal with cultural policing and issues of intellectual freedom in art? As it will be clear, issues of the right and wrong aesthetics partly answer these questions.

1961-1970: The Sixties or Cultural Experimentation and Idealism

On April 16, 1961, Castro declared in an impassionate speech the socialist character of the Revolution. The next day, an anti-Castro military force supported by the U.S. government invaded the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón). Within seventy-two hours, the Cubans halted the invasion. The socialist Revolution would survive and the field of power would change.

From 1961 to 1970, the Cuban government proceeded with the implementation of social, political, and economic reforms that profoundly altered the populist and nationalist character of the Revolution. In a gradual manner that culminated in the late 1960s, the Cuban government nationalized the means of production and changed, or at least tried to change, the relation between citizens and economic production. Instead of being driven by material desire, citizens were encouraged to increase production and to exercise creative thinking based on moral incentives. To effect this change, the Revolution required the political commitment and expertise of all intellectuals and cultural workers. Not surprisingly, the decade saw a rich variety of institutional initiatives aiming to fulfill these ambitious cultural transformation goals.

Structural changes went side by side with social and cultural changes. While an increased reliance on morality affected the economy, the growing importance of ethical and political public behavior changed social and political life. People's participation in revolutionary tasks and the prestige this participation carried gave political public actions ethical import. For instance, 200,000 volunteers and teachers carried on a

Literacy Campaign in 1961 that harnessed the masses into an educational action and mass media to the goal of framing the campaign and each of its participants in heroic, revolutionary clothes. Radio, television, and newspapers made heroes of the 200,000 volunteers by defining their actions as "noble" because they replicated the heroism of the revolutionary armed struggle. Aside from mass mobilization campaigns, political organizations multiplied gaining legitimacy on moral grounds: the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), which attempted to protect the nation from any enemy, reached 800,000 members by 1961; the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC), which sought to remedy labor injustices, became a powerful political force in the early 1960s. Paralleling the quick development of political and labor organizations, the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC), which pursued policy and social changes affecting women in the areas of health, labor, and education, had 376,000 members by 1962. [23]

The social rewards of participating in these activities, mobilizations, and organizations were related to prestige but also, over time, these rewards stratified economic resources by making those participants in revolutionary activities more likely to be given beneficial employment, advancement, professional training, advanced schooling, and other economic perks that were available in specific labor settings (access to cars, permits to travel, etc.). As the decade progressed, it became clearer that good citizenship would be rewarded and that bad citizenship would be punished.[24]

Cultural Policing and "Palabras a los Intelectuales"

Culturally, the 1960s were years of relative freedom, high idealism, and institutional experimentation. Ironically, all of these things came about after the first "official" cultural problem and the narrowing down of artistic freedoms. Issues of intellectual responsibility and accountability, freedom of expression, proper revolutionary behavior, and the policing of culture came to the fore as a result of the release and censorship of the documentary film *P.M.* in early 1961.

P.M., directed by Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal, was a twenty-three-minute documentary, filmed in a "free cinema" style, dealing with the nightlife of La Havana that included blacks and mulattos in a cabaret drinking and dancing rumba. Wanting to show it to general audiences, the filmmakers sent it to the Review Commission (Comisión Revisora), under ICAIC, for approval.[25] The Commission refused to approve it and seized the copy they received.[26] The film's restricted circulation, soon after its first showing, gave way to a series of meetings and statements that attempted to clear the air and clarify the position of ICAIC and the Cuban government in relation to cultural boundaries. The results were mixed for they clarified some issues but made other issues murkier. This first and influential event of cultural policing culminated in June 30, 1961, when Castro spoke to the intellectual community at the Havana's National Library.[27] In this speech, known as "Words to the Intellectuals" ("Palabras a los Intelectuales."), Castro laid out what would become the most important themes and issues surrounding art, literature, and film in Cuba.

As in other instances of policing, these events related to processes of restructuring within the cultural field but were also discussed publicly in terms of aesthetics. *P.M.* had come to the attention of ICAIC after a positive review by Nestor Almendros published in the cultural weekly *Bohemia.* To some within ICAIC, including its director Guevara, the documentary represented AfroCuban culture in roles associated with imperialist oppression.[28] Despite protests by Almendros and Guillermo Cabrera Infante (among many), the Review Commission judged *P.M.* aesthetically and politically irresponsible.

This over-the-top reaction of ICAIC and the Commission to a film that did nothing more than show, in an unusual aesthetics,[29] a brief glimpse of Cuban nightlife had little to do with AfroCuban culture. [30] The reaction can be understood better in reference to already existing animosities between *Lunes* and ICAIC. Franqui, head of *Revolución* and *Lunes,* and Guevara, disliked each other. Not surprising, Guevara also opposed the activities and aesthetic positions of *Lunes.* Since these aesthetic positions included formal experimentation and the de-politization of culture, the events spurred by *P.M.* would have repercussions on the type of aesthetics that would be deemed official, revolutionary, and proper, and Guevara would be an important player in selecting these. Guevara believed that change in cinematic form had to be gradual because people's taste was trained by non-experimental dominant formal techniques; the new cinema, he proposed, had the responsibility of appealing to the taste of the people, and thus it had the obligation to use non-experimental forms (100). Such ideas

opposed those coming from *Lunes,* who favored a freer and more experimental cultural and artistic production. *Lunes* embraced a different definition of revolutionary art, and, according to ICAIC, this resulted in the improper selection of an aesthetic treatment and theme. A proper aesthetics, according to Law 169, would deepen the revolutionary spirit. A proper theme would educate the people. *P.M.* arguably challenged these two ideas and the cultural police had to act.

Castro's response to the events was his famous speech "Palabras" that, based on a 1938 Surrealist Manifesto written by Diego Rivera and Andre Bretón, "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art," laid down principles that cultural production would have to follow if it was to be considered "proper" to the revolution (105-106). In this speech Castro utters the working principle for cultural production and cultural policy in Cuba: "Within the revolution anything, against the revolution nothing" ("Dentro la revolución todo, contra la revolución nada"). After "Palabras," *Lunes,* a dissenting and rich cultural space, disappeared and soon afterwards the UNEAC, a government-sponsored institution, was organized to bring together writers and artists. Like other institutions, UNEAC aimed to regulate that which it organized.

A brief analysis of "Palabras" yields a number of ideas important to the cultural *habitus* that opened up areas of debate and ambiguity.[31] For instance, Castro links culture to national security. Given that these events were happening only weeks after the Bay of Pigs invasion, one of the themes of "Palabras" was homeland security.[32] Attesting to the value of the political equation that more freedom means less security

and vice versa, Castro began by reminding everybody that the Revolution was in danger and that all activities, including cultural production, had to be subsumed to the goal of protecting the Revolution.[33] Creative and intellectual freedom would have to be understood in terms of Cuba's security issues, and any idea that might support counter-revolutionary ideologies would be deemed irresponsible and outside the Revolution.

Castro's take on freedoms had implications for ideas of selfhood, in particular if we conceive self as a way of narrativizing the individual, as a signifying practice by which people try to assume cogency of experience and being.[34] As I discussed in Chapter 2, because of the cultural field's reliance on ideas that highlight art's independence from the power structures, artists have often self-narrativized in terms of freedom and disinterest.[35] As importantly, artists are often defined outside the field as emblems of freedom. That Castro subsumed freedom to security meant that cultural creators would have to narrativize themselves differently, at least publicly, particularly if they wanted to participate in cultural institutions. Examples of this practice are found below.

Ironically, in a curious discursive move that connotes a dismissal of the ideological powers of form, Castro gave complete freedom to formal experimentation. (This, notwithstanding, did not prevent the disappearance of *Lunes* nor the continuation of debates about which formal techniques were better suited to build a revolutionary society.) He did so because he believed that formal experimentation alone could not

threatened the security of the nation. However, content, since it was subject to interpretation, had to be regulated.

"Palabras" was built on a complex discursive structure that made official some logical connections and discursive boundaries and that left other areas full of ambiguities. Among these ambiguous areas were the role of the artist in the Revolution, the definition of proper art and film, and even the definition of the nation, the Revolution, Cuban citizenship, and spectatorship. Ironically, in trying to clarify some of the questions that would regulate revolutionary culture, the speech opened up new areas of debate and uncertainty.

Some centered on the idea of a vanguard. Law 169 was passed before Castro declared that the Revolution was socialist. "Palabras" occurred only two months after the Bay of Pigs invasion and after the declaration of a socialist revolution. The concept of a vanguard, then embraced in a socialist manner, contained the roots of logical contradictions, and these were already present in "Palabras." According to Castro, the vanguard had to act as the redeemer of the masses; yet, because the masses represented both the purity of labor and, through their will, the legitimation of the regime, the masses would also have to redeem the vanguard. And so Castro stated that the revolutionary must be focused on the redemption of the people but should also cater to their (social) goals and (aesthetic) necessities: "The prism through which we analyze everything is this: to us, good will be what is good to them (the people); to us, it will be noble, beautiful and useful that which is noble, useful and beautiful to them."[36] The

populist tenor of the paragraph cannot hide the epistemological challenge that Castro and other revolutionaries would have to solve: how can the vanguard know what is beautiful, useful, noble and good to the people? And how can the vanguard separate that which is good and beautiful to the people from that which must be redeemed? These questions have been central to Marxist aesthetics, and the Cuban case offers an instantiation of the questions and an attempt to reconcile theoretical answers with institutional practices. The seeds of these answers and the principles leading institutional policy are found in Castro's speech and they are far from casual. They are well reasoned and can consistently be found in other revolutionary speeches, slogans, and the like. In addition, a rich body of answers to these questions appears during the 1960s and is discussed in Chapter 4.

Anchoring Castro's answers was the idea that in revolutionary ideology the potentially discreet categories of the Revolution, the nation, and the people were structured in systems of equivalences. These were aimed to exercise what I called in Chapter 1 the mistrust of certain hegemonic discourses (for instance bourgeois art), to fuel the search for independent, liberatory ways of expressing the "real conditions of existence of the people" (such as dialectic filmic narratives concentrating on social themes or history) and to redeem the people through revolutionary "technologies of self."

Castro brought together the discrete discourses of the nation, the people, and the Revolution half way through his speech: "Against the Revolution nothing, because the

Revolution has its rights and its first right is the right to exist and against the Revolution's right to be and to exist, no one should stand. Because the Revolution involves the interests of the people, because the Revolution signifies the interests of the whole Nation…"[37] To analyze these statements it is necessary to point out that discourse marks the boundary of that which can be said, and given that the statements linking the nation to the Revolution were uttered at such an important time suggests that their enunciative effectiveness already existed. They already made sense; they were legitimate and carried power. They also carried meaning at the connotative level in which the word "signifies" suggests an equivalence between Revolution and nation, an equivalence that potentially legitimizes and gives logical coherence to the paragraph and to the speech. Because if the Revolution does not "signify" the nation and, even more, because if the nature of this signification is not satisfactory, then, any regulatory gesture coming from the Revolution could be understood as foreign to the nation, to the people. But what type of equivalence was the speech using? How could the Revolution "signify" the nation?

To Castro, the equivalence was not simply an ideological equivalence.[38] The nation was more complex than the Revolution. It is precisely this complexity that created the necessity for the speech. The richness of culture, the existence of *Lunes*, the multiplicity of ideas about art, film, and literature came together in a struggle for hegemony and all of these within the nation. Cuban culture showed structural complexities that fostered multiple trajectories for filmic and cultural production and

that potentially furnished counter-revolutionary or a-revolutionary significations. The imaginary audience of the speech was the nation (the multiplicity represented by the intellectuals), not the Revolution (the homogeneity represented by the vanguard); thus, nation and Revolution were not a mirroring. The relation was not a simplistic equivalence born by parallel historical trajectories. Clearly, the nation preceded the Revolution and even when the "idea" of the nation as a geopolitical independent entity might be conceived and realized only through the process of the Revolution, for Castro, the nation, as the people, produced the necessity of and furnished the process of the Revolution. Therefore, the Revolution was inserted into the history of the Nation potentially to give life to an independent entity, auto-regulated and auto-defined where the People finally could govern itself. And the People were, to Castro, the oppressed majority and the reason for the Revolution (8).

At this point one can glimpse the type of relation to which Castro refers and that serves as the basis of his argument. The word "signifies" suggests that the relation depended on the specific philosophical, social, and cultural context outside which the significative equivalence was imperfect and therefore null, and it was precisely this discursive *context* that Castro was trying to legitimate and that already had a history since 1959. In this logical system, in this context, the Revolution signified the nation because it was only in such convergence where the people could overturn their oppression, break alienation, and become the agents of history. *Casa* stated the same idea in its opening issue in 1960 as follows: "The people is an unknown force; the

people, that ignoring false patience or self-serving resignation, is, finally, the creator of the environment where man is produced."[39]

The Revolution was thus teleological and unidirectional because it was based in one single goal, the goal of destroying the trajectory of domination that oppressed the people. Moreover, since its teleology required the active interpretation of the people's reality in order to separate that which is pure and noble from that which is alienated, the Revolution had to be seen also as hermeneutical. Indeed, the legitimacy of the Revolution, which was dependent on the Revolution's ability to break the people's oppression, had to rely, at all times, on hermeneutic tasks carried on by the political and the cultural vanguard.

The notion that the Revolution was a process solidified in teleology and dependent on hermeneutics established the parameters of dialogue among artists, filmmakers, and Castro. Creative freedom, the signature characteristic of the pre-revolutionary artist, was questioned because the concept was shown to be ahistorical; it was a concept that produced a diffused semantic that was potentially excessive and thus dangerous. Hence, and contrary to the North American liberal tradition, creative freedom was not defined as an inalienable individual right but as a cultural concept that, in its extreme expression, could only be supported by a bourgeois regime. As I will show in the following sections, the new Cuban freedom depended on the cultural context, on the subject, and on the social landscape, and freedom ceased to be an important marker of artistic and intellectual production. Instead, in the cultural Cuban

habitus, I argue, the revolutionary cultural producer embraced a revolutionary hermeneutics, which applied a revolutionary aesthetics, as his/her new and complex task.

In the revolutionary Cuba of the early 1960s, the restructuring of economic life found a parallel in the restructuring of the economy of significations. Without a multi-directional politics and economy, the semantic and discursive production (philosophic and ideological) became handicapped, and the intellectual and the artist were left struggling to maintain the hegemonic process while avoiding a frontal attack to the revolutionary *status quo*. "Noble," "useful," "beautiful," the three goals Castro mentioned as desirable, were and are three modalities of being evaluated subjectively, and, according to Castro, the subjectivities of the Cuban people, embedded in tradition and taste, would become the objective standards that the revolutionary cultural artifact would have to follow. Film, art, and literature would have to be noble, useful, and beautiful to the people and still have a redemptive potential. Their role would be dual and almost paradoxical: they would have to please, thus, interpellate, the Cuban subjectivity while enticing the Cuban selves to transformation, to develop *conciencia*.

Given its ambiguity and contradiction, while Castro's speech provided some of the parameters that would guide cultural production and cultural policy in the following years, it cannot, strictly speaking, be called policy. Instead, the speech played the role of an ethical and political framework that would be followed and debated within cultural institutions; the results of these debates would inform actual policy. Indeed, the speech

justified the activities of the Cuban film institute, and it was thus a defense of already existing cultural policies. The speech was also a reworking of Cuba's main cultural themes and thus framed aesthetic discussions from then onwards: the role of the intellectual, or vanguard as it would be also called, in a communist/socialist society continued to be the using of ideological tools for the education of the people. Yet, the vanguard was asked to learn revolutionary values *from* the people. Ideally, this process of mutual education would result in different things for each group: through it, the people would acquire *conciencia*: exercising it, the vanguard would acquire a revolutionary hermeneutics and aesthetics.

Reorganization of the Cultural Field

Besides the ideological parameters that "Palabras" set for culture and art, the speech marked a reorganization of the cultural field and legitimization of a set of cultural debates that advanced the themes introduced by Law 169: these were the role of the intellectual, the definition of revolutionary art, and the proper objects of artistic reflection. To these three themes, "Palabras" added the fourth one, the proper policing of culture. Regarding the reorganization of the cultural field, the disbanding of *Lunes* placed some of Cuba's best literary and filmic talents into positions from which they could exert little cultural influence. Cabrera was sent to Brussels as a cultural attaché; his brother Sabá was sent to Madrid. Jimenéz went as a cameraman to Channel 2. Almendros defected. The exception was Antón Arrufat, who was called by Santamaria

to *Casa* and where he was instrumental in making that journal one of the best in Latin America.[40]

"Palabras" was a call for institutional responsibility and was immediately followed by the organization of the First Congress of Writers and Artists in 1961 and, during the Congress, a brand new institution responsible for and to the literary field of cultural production: UNEAC. UNEAC's first president, from 1961 to 1986, was Nicolás Guillén, who, though belonging to an early generation of intellectuals, became Cuba's National Poet and exemplar to all revolutionaries. A member of the communist party since 1934 and with ample national and international fame and recognition, Guillén was a selection proper to mediate the theoretical and political debates of the literary community.[41] Though the general goal of UNEAC was to establish "links between Cuban artists and writers and [artists and writers] from socialist and non-socialist countries " (186). the institution also had the goals of linking artistic work to revolutionary objectives, organizing discussion on literature and artistic creation, and encouraging new talent through literary competitions and artistic exhibit.[42] In following these goals, UNEAC became key to the constitution of standards of value (which implied the mediation between aesthetic and political concerns). In addition, UNEAC influenced the general field of culture by publishing an art bulletin and two literary magazines, one of which remained influential for decades, *La Gaceta de Cuba*.

UNEAC's relative independence from the government became clear during the mid-1960s and early 1970s. During these times some homosexual writers were sent to

labor camps (Military Units of Aid to Production, UMAP); however, UNEAC intervened in their behalf and they were set free. By the time Lisandro Otero took power in 1986, UNEAC had fewer connections to the younger generations of artists. However, Otero established policies for the democratization of the UNEAC, opening the ranks to more voices. Also during Otero's tenure, UNEAC was acting less as an ideological and cultural organization and more as a business that promoted the arts. Some people benefited monetarily from this situation.[43]

The reorganization of people within institutions and the creation of new institutions also meant the rehierarchization of theoretical positions, ideologies, and practices within the *habitus*. The ideological success of Guevara over *Lunes* meant that ICAIC would gain even more prominence in the nascent Cuban cultural field. Moreover, UNEAC, together with Casa, would profoundly influence the literary field and the theoretical fields in Cuba. These official cultural institutions controlled publishing, production, distribution, and promotion of art, literature, and film. Aside from UNEAC's sponsored journals and magazines, *Cine Cubano* (ICAIC's journal), and *Casa,* I should mention at least *Granma*, *La Gaceta de Cuba*, *Revolución y Cultura*, and *El Caimán Barbudo*. Together these institutional spaces crafted a relatively solid ideological front that shaped Cuba in the decades to follow and that would make culture an eminently political activity (to the cultural vanguard) and experience (to the people). They all generally sponsored ideas and cultural products that could politically exist "within the Revolution" and only rarely tested the boundaries of the permissible.

However, the four areas of debate continued also within the Revolution and existed as agonistic spaces where theoretical divisions could exist and where questions of taste and theory could be fought.

The growing control that cultural institutions had in the cultural field did not translate immediately in a reduction of freedom for cultural production. In fact, the opposite occurred during the following years after "Palabras." Formal experimentation and high productivity characterized the film world from 1961 to 1968, and the literary world, though shaken by the government's actions regarding *Lunes*, regained, by 1965, its formal vitality.[44] This was the result of Guevara's intervention that year on the aesthetic debates regarding socialist realism. In a celebrated letter, titled "Socialism and Man in Cuba" ("El Socialismo y el Hombre en Cuba"), Guevara encourages cultural workers to pursue artistic investigations and reprimanded those in power for stifling culture by imposing socialist realism in a doctrinaire fashion.[45]

In film, these years were full of vitality and aesthetic and organizational experimentation. After the consolidation of ICAIC within the government as one of Cuba's leading cultural organizations, the film community organized itself around the technically and theoretically talented leadership of Gutiérrez, Solás, Sergio Giral, Alvarez, and Guevara. Many newsreels, documentaries, and shorts paved the way to an increasingly sophisticated output of feature films that culminated with the release in 1968 of two internationally multi-awarded films: *Lucia*, by Humberto Solás, and *Memories of Underdevelopment* by Gutiérrez. During these years, ICAIC also played

the role of training-ground for technicians, writers, directors, and photographers. In fact, most film personnel learned the ropes of their craft during these years, and it was not unusual to find almost full crews undertaking their first projects together. Such was the case of Gutiérrez's *The Twelve Chairs* (1970) where "the director of photography, the camera operator, the focus-puller and the camera assistants were all working in a feature film for the first time."[46]

Also during the years the filmmaking community displayed a new sense of self-assurance, evident in the ongoing formal experimentation, particularly in short film production. Though ICAIC began with personnel influenced by Italian neorealism, directors Giral, Gutiérrez, Solás, Fernando Villaverde, and Fausto Canel produced experimental work also influenced by the French new wave.[47] This self-assurance was also evinced in Guevara's call for artistic autonomy even if it meant conflicting with Law 169. Criticizing the Consejo Nacional de Cultura (National Council for Culture, CNC) and UNEAC's early aesthetic populism, Guevara argued that no one would benefit from reducing the complexity and substance of the artwork as a result of the goal of communicating to the masses. Backtracking from his position regarding *P.M.*, Guevara defended the young filmmakers' need to experiment with form; he insisted that film and art cannot simply fulfill an educational goal, but must strive to find an aesthetic freedom of its own worth (132).

While debates on aesthetics usually functioned to mask debates about the social freedom of the cultural worker, the profound social transformations needed in order to

supply the new society with "culture" that could enlighten its users (or at least not damage their subjectivities) required more than aesthetic premises. Reorganizing old institutions into socialist ones meant altering the subjective relationship that cultural workers had to their craft.[48] For instance, while freedom of expression could be justified, profit could not. Even personal glory came to be seen, at different times, suspiciously. Moral rewards, as those suggested by Guevara, had to be an incentive sufficient to produce the highest possible quality of artwork.[49] As discussed in Chapter 4, the cultural worker was also expected to establish very specific, at times functionalist, relationships with her/his own work and to respond to contingent political imperatives with good disposition and creative gusto. In addition, in cultural contexts like film production, individualism gave way to collectivism, deeply changing the idea of authorship and artistic production. Filmmakers were expected to work on each other's projects, and committees, rather than individual producers or directors, began exercising administrative roles.[50]

The successes of the decade were significant. By the early 1970s, the size, international importance, and reach of the Cuban cultural field had multiplied. Literacy had reached levels higher than those of some first world nations. The number of theater groups went from one in 1958 to thirteen in 1970. Museums went from six to thirty. Publishing, almost non-existent before the Revolution, became a thriving industry. Books per capita went from 0.6 in 1958 to 4.1 in 1975. Mobile cinemas performed more than 1.5 million screenings by the mid-1970s. By 1968, ICAIC had produced 44

features, 204 documentaries, 435 newsreels, 77 educational films, and 49 animated films.[51] The legacies of the first decade would have been as significant as its accomplishments had it not been for the cases of censorship and cultural repression, including the now famous Padilla case, that tarnished Cuba's cultural reputation inside and outside Cuba.

Heberto Padilla was a novelist and poet originally affiliated with *Lunes*. In 1967, Padilla found himself working with the newspaper *Granma* when he was invited by *El Caimán Barbudo* to write a critique of a novel written by Otero, then vice-president of CNC. Padilla's dislike for Otero's novel and his praise for *Tres Tristes Tigres*, a novel by Cabrera from *Lunes* and then in exile, put Padilla into trouble. In October 1968 his collection of poems *Fuera del Juego* (*Out of Play* or *Offside*) won a national prize from UNEAC. In spite of this, UNEAC published the book with a disapproving introduction and later, during November and December of 1968, several articles criticizing him and his work appeared in *Verde Olivo*, a journal of the armed forces. He later lost his job at *Granma*.[52]

A debate of international proportions continued during the months to follow. Julio Cortázar, the renowned Argentinean writer, attempted to defend Padilla with no success. Criticisms of the way Cuban cultural institutions were dealing with Padilla came also from Chile, Mexico, and France.[53] On March 20, 1971, Padilla was arrested and jailed for thirty-nine days. He was released after writing a letter confessing

wrongdoing. By then, the cultural climate in Cuba had changed, and Cuba's international cultural appeal had dwindled.

1970-1985: Institutionalization and Cultural Accountability

It would be a mistake to believe that the events surrounding Padilla were solely the result of cultural intolerance from the Cuban cultural leadership. For while Padilla's tribulations were occurring, Cuba was also undergoing a series of challenges and setbacks in the social, economic, and, by extension, political realms. The troubled relationship with the U.S.S.R. and Cuba's economic plans exemplified these challenges.

Since early in the Revolutionary period, the leadership understood that the island's reliance on a monoculture (sugar) was risky and attempted to diversify, though with rather poor results.[54] The U.S.S.R., however, began providing sought out training and technical support for diversification and, in addition, bought the Cuban sugar. The missile crisis cooled off this relationship (Castro was infuriated with Nikita Khrushchev for backing down without consulting with Cuba), and after, the Cubans, led by Che Guevara, attempted to adopt Maoist principles of economic development (one of which I have commented on already as the push to produce a New Man) that included voluntary work during the sugar harvest (6).[55] Throughout these years, the Cuban leadership moved away from the Soviets to the point that when the Prague's spring process began in 1967, the Cuban press gave it rather mix reviews.[56] However, by then the economy was in trouble, and, later that year, when Guevara died, the process of

independence from the U.S.S.R. crumbled.[57] In 1968, the Soviets gave an ultimatum to Cuba threatening the country with halting the purchase of Cuba's sugar. This forced Cuba to maintain a pro-Soviet line, which meant supporting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (8).

The death of Guevara in 1967 had given way to a short period of high idealism that the government tried to direct, unsuccessfully, toward the weakening economy. Emblematic of this was the failure of the sugar harvest of 1970. Promised as a way of remedying economic underdevelopment that had reached dramatic levels during the 1960s, the goal of a ten-million-ton harvest was an attempt to generate political and economic resources needed to continue the transformation of Cuba into a communist nation. Castro's idea was simple and intrinsic to his overall plan of economic development: gradually to push Cuban society to reach a sugar quota so much higher than Cuba's average of less than six million metric ton that it would infuse the economy with cash resources and would allow Cuba to maintain its sugar commitments with the USSR. Despite reaching a record 7.6 million tons, the 1970 harvest was considered an economic, social, and political failure and a blow to the attempt to produce a Cuban blend of socialism and communism, one of Guevara's core ideas.[58] This put a stop, at least momentarily, to the idealism and radicalism of public ethics that characterized the 1960s. The project of forming a communist nation halted at decade's end and, in its stead, the Cuban leadership sought socialism. From 1970 until mid 1980s, Cuba

underwent a process of institutionalization that affected social relations, conceptions of citizenship, and public behavior. The communist Revolution had ended.[59]

During the 1970s the Cuban leadership redesigned their style of government, centralizing power into the PCC and instituting Soviet models of political and economic organization (99). Alongside centralization, the Organs of Popular Power (OPP) decentralized power by spreading some administrative and economic decisions to municipalities. The Economic Management and Planning System (SDPE) instituted in the mid 1970s was the "antithesis" of economic guidelines of the 1960s. "The new system was an attempt to introduce relative decentralization, profitability criteria, material incentives, and self-financed enterprises" (126). While general increments of salaries and quality of goods benefited a broad sector of the Cuban citizenry, the SDPE, with its emphasis on production, slowed down the entrance of women into the labor force. In 1976, and to the dismay of the Cuban Federation of Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC), the Labor Ministry passed policies that banned women from three hundred job categories. Not until the mid 1980s were most of these jobs again open to women. From occupying 26 percent of the labor force in mid-1970s, women occupied 38 percent by 1986, an increase of 12 percent. In 1976, the Cuban government instituted the Family Code that attempted to regulate the private behavior of men and stipulated equality of the sexes at work and at home. These measures tried to alleviate the unjust burden placed on women by a society in which they were expected to be part

of the labor force and in a culture were machismo made women responsible for child rearing and home labor (139-142).[60]

The biggest social crisis of that period came in 1980 when, from April to September, 125,000 citizens left Cuba via the Mariel boatlift. The PCC organized meetings where those wanting to leave would be labeled "scum" and publicly repudiated. Actions like these tarnished the relationship the government had with the people and exacerbated the need for reevaluating ideas about public and private behavior (150). The introduction of material incentives, the abandonment of the most idealist political lexicon, the ongoing failure of the government to deliver on the promises explicit in the social, political, and economic reforms, and the necessity to combat pernicious ideologies, such as machismo, transformed the Cuban people's relationship to the Revolution and generated massive social dissent.

Cultural Normativity

Compared to the 1960s, cultural freedoms available at the beginning of the 1970s were reduced. A wave of institutional declarations in which the community of official cultural workers expressed their support for the Revolution and almost unanimously sided with the actions of UNEAC, Casa, and the Cuban government followed the Padilla case. Fear was apparent.[61] But also apparent was the acceptance of understanding the value of cultural work and the cultural worker in terms of political signifiers. Responding to the criticism of international intellectuals over the handling of Padilla, forty-nine of Cuba's most important cultural workers, which included writers,

filmmakers, poets, essayists, and cultural administrators, wrote a letter restating the political value of culture and concluded: "Our people…are the makers of their simply and radically human, revolutionary, culture."[62] Those working at Casa, ICAIC, and UNEAC issued similar declarations. In these declarations, the freedom of expression of individuals was stated as having less value than the freedom of expression of the people. Since the Revolution was the medium the people used to express themselves, protecting the Revolution was more important than protecting individual freedoms.[63]

In order to cope with reduced individual freedoms and an institutional and national climate of caution, cultural workers had to reevaluate their own definitions of public life, the Revolution, the role of culture, and their relationship to governmental goals. As had been the case after "Palabras," the Cuban government organized a forum in which these reevaluations could happen in a supervised space. In May 1971, only weeks after Padilla's imprisonment, cultural and educational organizations came together in the First National Congress of Education and Culture (Primer Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura). The joint "Declaration" by the Congress left no doubt that it was organized partly as a place for discussing the Padilla case and the international criticisms issued by foreign leftist intellectuals. Responding to criticisms by the likes of de Beauvoir, Cortazar, Marguerite Duras, Carlos Fuentes, and Sartre, who had labeled the Revolution repressive and even Stalinist, the "Declaration" called these leftist intellectuals "petit bourgeois" and "pseudo-leftists" who had used the Cuban Revolution as a means of gaining access and prestige in third world nations.

Moreover, these foreign intellectuals were defined as the harbingers of a new political and cultural colonization that attempted to undermine Cuba's cultural sovereignty by de-historicizing freedom of expression.[64] Speaking against the ideas of natural rights and freedoms that supported liberalist *and* colonialist ideologies, the Cuban intellectuals made reference to the many ways and times in which ideas of natural rights and freedoms had been used against Cuba. Spanish culture and, later, American-controlled media, Juan Marinello argued, had used liberal ideas of freedom to naturalize their oppression of Cuban society. [65] Supporting the Cubans' case were historically known facts such as the way William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer manipulated the press to legitimize American intervention in Cuba's War of Independence against Spain in 1898.

For these Cubans, to defend freedom of expression as a transcendental value, as they argued foreign intellectuals did, was to be blind to history and mistakenly to place freedom of expression atop any other freedoms. Using this theoretical position may have been a way some Cuban intellectuals, without choice, rationalized state coercion, but the position is far from absurd. In fact, its political and epistemological underpinnings can be traced back to Marx and, more recently, to Althusser. Marx criticized American and French-influenced ideas of civil society because they conceived of civil society as a space for the preservation of the rights and freedoms of individuals-as-monads ("egotistic man"), sacrificing the political character of society and of humans. The "rights of man," among which Marx would place freedom of expression,

pertain only to private interests, natural necessities, and property, curtailing the constitution of community and political association. According to Marx, the rights and freedoms of man can result in human emancipation only when humans used them to establish community and, thus, assumed these rights and freedoms in their full political potential.[66] Althusser, whose work was published in Cuba since the mid-1960s, also had undermined the status of liberal conceptions of individuality. He argued that freedom, and the humanist "philosophy" in which freedom was couched, were ideologies invested in the reconstitution of power structures.[67] Implied in Marx's and Althusser's ideas is the position that the well being of society cannot be held hostage to any one freedom. Any freedom is part of a system of freedoms, and it is from the survival of the system that any given freedom can become beneficial to society and individuals. Moreover, understanding freedoms as being part of a system redefines them, because a system always places limits on its single elements. In addition, only within the system can these freedoms be defined and have a social character. Outside the system, any freedom becomes transcendental and, arguably, asocial.

The discursive construction of "freedom" in this period is consistent with the way Castro used freedom in "Palabras" and a theoretically viable option for treating freedom as dispensable in narratives of selfhood. Castro argued that creative freedom was ahistorical and had to be subsumed to the security needs of the Revolution. The Congress defined cultural freedom as contingent and not a natural right and, in a sense agreeing with Marx and Althusser, assumed freedom's ideological character and

challenged its ahistoricity. Ironically, freedom was defined as historical yet it continued being a tool of the power structure. The PCC, Castro, and the cultural vanguard reserved themselves the right to define when history would have to trump freedom. In a manner consistent with the beginning of the 1960s, the idea of "security" was used to the field of power's advantage.

As in "Palabras," the criticisms of foreign intellectuals were seen as attacks on Cuba's sovereignty and thus as threats to the nation. Like in "Palabras," framing the problem (accusations) in terms of colonization attempted to rebuild the ideological boundaries of the Revolution. But unlike in "Palabras," the new border was placed tighter around the ideological values of central government. Outside these boundaries were not only the values of the "imperialist" foe, but also some types of leftist politics and, by extension, leftist aesthetics. The Congress redefined the famed sentence "within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing." While in the 1960s the question of what was within the Revolution was open, it normally incorporated any and all types of Marxist aesthetics, be it Sartre's, Althusser's, Lenin's, or Brecht's. During the 1970s and 1980s, some Marxisms would not be seen as within the Revolution, and an increasing intellectual and expressive conservatism began.

Padilla saw the role of the artist as being critical of everything (a common definition of the artist as critic of society). Contrary to this, the culture advocated by the Congress was culture for the people. The official culture understood art to be ideological equipment designed to shape and improve the citizenry. The culture of a

socialist society could not be elitist and had to be able to shape revolutionary youth in ways akin to collectivism, avoiding egotism and other ideological maladies. What Cubans called "ideological diversionism" (diversionismo ideológico), for instance, became a malady associated with elitist ideas propagated by foreign intellectuals interested in weakening the Cuban Revolution. According to Raúl Castro (Fidel Castro's brother and Second Secretary of the PCC), ideological diversionism attacked mostly youth and intellectuals. Its symptoms included rational arguments (sometimes couched in socialist language), the retelling of historical events in self-serving ways, the use of mass media to propagate these arguments and histories, and the utilization of academic or research projects to engage in ideological argumentation.[68]

Ironically, the Padilla case and the challenges to Cuba's cultural freedom of the late 1960s were issues roughly coinciding with the coming of age of the film community. While the inept handling of Padilla by cultural institutions and by the abusive involvement of the Cuban government shook the literary world, *Lucia* and *Memories of Underdevelopment* were gaining international acclaim.[69] Not surprisingly, in 1972 when Otero published a report on Cuban cultural policy for UNESCO, he dedicated three times more space to ICAIC than to UNEAC and Casa together. Embarrassment aside, the successes of Cuban film did not need to be defended.[70]

ICAIC's success, however, did not guarantee its funding. The economic crisis of late 1960s, exacerbated even more by the failed harvest of 1970, put a strain in all economic activities. In 1970, ICAIC's production was reduced. No new features were

produced until 1971, and these features evidenced some aesthetic restraints.[71] Between 1970 and 1974, ICAIC emphasized documentary production, and, curiously, during these years, feature-length film based on non-fictional subjects outnumbered fictional themes.[72] The traditional answers to the question of what is good revolutionary culture were no longer valid, and filmmakers and other cultural workers avoided ambiguous aesthetic statements.

Women and the Revolution

While cultural expression, freedom, and institutionalization were demarcating the realm of the permissible, the cultural field also saw an increase in the public discussion of the issue of sex and gender. Though sex and gender were social systems that the Cuban Revolution sought to equalize since 1959, the way the "woman's question" had reached public forums was through debates on the economy of gender, the inclusion of women in labor, and the role women had played in the revolutionary wars. Outside these areas and, in particular, in the arts remarkably little discussion occurred on the topic of women, the representation of women, or the artistic practice of women. A quick survey of mainstream, intellectual, and cultural media reveals that during the 1960s gender and sex were often found in newspapers and magazines, particularly the magazine *Mujeres*. Sex and gender was an object of intellectual cultural commentary in specialized cultural journals until the beginning of the 1970s. *Casa* included several articles on women's liberation in its March-June 1971 issue. *Revolución y Cultura* did the same in October 1974. These academic interventions in the issue continued looking

at women in terms of the economy and the Revolution, but new concerns about the culture of gender became a central aspect of public debate and cultural expression during the mid-1970s.

The Cuban Revolution had made women a priority since 1959. Due to the efforts of the Cuban leadership and the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC) directed by Vilma Espín (wife of Raul Castro), women integrated into the labor force in larger numbers during the 1960s. The education of women had also changed the traditional jobs women had. By 1981, almost a third of the graduates from geology, mining, metallurgy, and construction and almost a fifth of those graduating from electronics were women. By the mid-1980s, women comprised around two thirds of the incoming students in law and medical professions.[73]

To implement and legitimize, theoretically and ideologically, these profound changes in society, the Cuban government and the FMC had approached the "woman question" from a socialist perspective mainly influenced by Engels. Like Engels, the hegemonic view of the woman question in Cuba asserted that women's oppression was the result of economic oppression propitiated by capitalism and that women's freedom could only come as the result of the abolition of private property and the class system. For instance, in an article published in 1971 in *Casa*, Isabel Larguia and John Dumoulin contended that sexual liberation was illusory freedom since only in a classless society could individuals overcome alienation. Criticizing all types of classes, Larguia and Dumoulin advocated for the elimination of most markers of femininity, given that these

were seen as complicit with capitalism and patriarchy.[74] Yet, Larguia and Dumoulin's article nor any of the articles published in *Casa* or, three years later, in *Revolución y Cultura* criticized men's markers of identity, despite being obviously patriarchal and eminently related to capitalism. The problem for women was not men but capitalism.

Engels's materialist view of gender became the theoretical basis that legitimated FMC's institutional actions, goals, and orientations. As a consequence of these theoretical positions, the FMC and the PCC favored policies that would bring women into the work force as equals to men and that would provide socialized help to women in the areas of child care and sex education.[75]

The FMC was the institution in charge of officially pursuing policy that affected women and that undertook the tasks of organizing women. Formed in May 1970 as a way of mobilizing women (for instance, the organization included the Federadas, a group of politico-military women who performed military and defense roles), the FMC sought policy on education, health, and childcare. Its organizational identity during the 1960s and 1970s was not feminist: for Espín, women's problems were social problems and women's liberation depended on everybody's liberation (196). Despite not being traditionally feminist, FMC performed many of the roles that Western feminist organizations normally carry out, such as lobbying the government about issues of discrimination in the work place and other issues pertaining to the public and private lives of women.

The FMC took a more feminist stance in mid-1970s. The successes in education and labor had not translated into an egalitarian social environment and, by 1974, it became necessary to re-address the women's question in terms of the social and cultural relationships between men and women. In 1974, during the Second FMC Congress, PCC leaders Blas Roca and Antonio Pérez discussed male attitudes about women and criticized machismo. Castro closed the Congress with a speech in which he condemned the Cuban tendency to produce organizations centered on men, and he used the phrase "revolution within the revolution" (but not in reference to Gloria Steinem's book) to signal the need to change the way gender differences produced gendered institutions and inequalities even within the Revolution. Continuing with a push for developing a series of theses that could be the basis for new legislation, FMC produced the Thesis on the Full Exercise of Women's Equality (1975), delivered to PCC members during the First Congress of the PCC. In addition, in 1974-1975 the FMC drafted the Family Code. FMC's legal incursions in the juridical structure were successful, and it provided the basis for a legislative apparatus that would account for women's issues in a socialist society (201).

The Cuban Family Code became law on March 8, 1975, International Women's Day. As a legal prescription for equality within the home, it attempted to strengthen the Cuban family on the basis of respect between sexes. Articles 27 and 28 were quite controversial since they prescribed shared housework and responsibilities in the home (201). Equality within the home became a legal right of women, blurring further the

older lines between the private and the public.[76] Also controversial, though for quite different reasons, was the emphasis that the Family Code placed on the nuclear family. This was seen as an attempt to prescribe white middle-class family values in a population where alternative family arrangements were common. In particular, AfroCuban populations, with a high percentage of single parents, particularly women, were seen as targets of this normalizing law.

Though the Family Code was not an enforceable law, it became a tool that educators and cultural workers used to try to shape a new system of sex equality. As Debra Evenson explains, it

> has become a tool for education and change. The adoption of the Family Code and the continuing discussion it fostered has altered the way Cubans view domestic relations. Although men did not help with the laundry and cooking immediately…the message was clear that the correct, revolutionary thing to do is to share the housework.[77]

Attaching revolutionary value to gendered behavior became a way of transforming sex relations. It also became a way of transforming sexuality by framing sexual education as political formation. Also since the mid-1970s, FMC began lobbying for more sexual education that would cover not only questions of female hygiene and pregnancy but also teen sexuality, virginity, and STDs. Though machismo and homophobia curtailed the value of some efforts (for instance, limiting the teaching on the use of condoms), sexual education became widespread (67-88). By making public the private, and by attaching revolutionary value to sexual and gender ethics, FMC and

PCC attempted, with some success, at crafting a new ideology of gender that accounted for Cuba's historical specificity and worked for women's economic and social equality.

Since four of the five films that will be discussed in the next chapters deal specifically with gender, more discussion regarding gender is reserved for those chapters. Suffice it to say that some cultural institutions have abided by tolerant ideas about gender and sexuality while others have not. Despite general social intolerance of homosexuality, some public figures such as Antón Arrufat, chief editor of *Casa*, Virgilio Piñera, celebrated poet, and Guevara, head of ICAIC, were able to negotiate their sexual orientation without compromising their status within the Revolution. Sadly, others like Calvert Casey and Reynaldo Arenas were not so fortunate.[78] Both were persecuted inside Cuba until they left the island.

Women in ICAIC had a different story. Though, officially, ICAIC functioned under the principle of sex equality, only one woman, Sara Gómez, was able to produce a feature film in the period between 1959 and 1985. Whether the result of discriminatory practices or simply chance, ICAIC has been largely a male institution. Moreover, as far as I am aware, while other industries established affirmative-action-type policies to increase the representation of women within their ranks, no serious effort to increase women's representation in the film industry by ICAIC has occurred.[79] For instance, Julianne Burton reports that in 1974-1975 ICAIC tried to inject new blood into the institution and "took a score of university graduates (the vast majority women) for training as analistas, using them as apprentices in all sectors of the production

process from script research to assistant production."[80] Yet, she continues, to move from assistant to documentarist (most ICAIC directors started as documentarians) is extremely difficult and takes a long time, thus slowing down or making impossible injecting these women in the actual directing group. For instance, Michael Chanan reports that half of the new documentary directors in 1984 were women; yet, as far as I know, no features by women have been released.[81] Women filmmakers do exist; they just do not have the chance of directing features. For instance, Rebecca Chávez, Marisol Trujillo, Belkis Vega, and Mayra Vilaris have worked as directors since the late 1970s and together have produced dozens of shorts, documentaries, and educational films.[82]

Cultural Institutionalization

In 1975, as commented before, the First National Congress of the PCC was the forum for FMC's theses about women in society. In addition to this important cultural event that would affect the public and private lives of most Cubans, the Congress also marked the continuation of the institutionalization of culture. The process of centralization that had been occurring in economy, politics, and government reached the cultural field and was made policy in the "Central Briefing to the First Congress of the PCC" ("Informe Central al I Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba") and the "Thesis 'About Artistic and Literary Culture'" ("Tesis 'Sobre la cultural artística y literaria'") presented to the Congress. These two documents outlined the PCC's ideological program for literature and art. The "Central Briefing" celebrated the cultural development of Cuba since 1959.[83] The "Thesis" described the ways in which cultural

policy, aesthetic ideas, and revolutionary goals had joined forces in the effort to transform Cuba into a proper socialist humanist state and Cubans into proper citizens of such a state.[84]

The "Thesis" was a document designed to fulfill several goals. First, by making reference to "Palabras," the First Congress of UNEAC (1961), and the First Congress of Education and Culture (1971), it placed itself as continuing the policy traditions instituted in these forums. This meant that the document could not criticize nor depart substantially from cultural policies instituted before. In doing so, it legitimized the early cultural directions taken by the Revolution. It praised the cultural contribution of institutions, in particular Casa, ICAIC, and UNEAC and numerated the advances that the Revolution had brought to Cubans in the cultural field: mass participation in cultural activities, the reevaluation of traditional cultural forms, the organization of art schools and cultural institutions, the engendering of a national cinema, a publishing industry, and national ballet.

If the first goals of the "Thesis" were to praise the structuring of the field, the second goal of the document legitimized the *habitus* by defending the actions cultural institutions and government had taken with regard to the policing of culture. This defense was staged by appealing to aesthetic principles that resembled those of "Palabras." However, some differences are important to mention. In "Palabras," Castro stated the belief that revolutionary artists would produce revolutionary art. The "Thesis" was less naïve about ideology. Partly because of the Padilla case and the amount of

leftist literature and aesthetics that Cuban cultural institutions were afterwards forced to see suspiciously, "Thesis" suggested that art might embody bourgeois ideology in subtle ways; thus, it asked cultural workers to be vigilant of the manners in which their own art could embody imperialist ideologies (71).

A more significant difference between "Palabras" and "Thesis" had to do with the document's different levels of trust of the Cuban people. While "Palabras" asked cultural workers to reflect on the people in order to learn the goals of socialism (Castro stated: "to us, good will be what is good to [the people]; to us, it will be noble, beautiful and useful that which is noble, useful and beautiful to them"[85]), the "Thesis" asked cultural workers to reflect on socialism: "The best source of originality in artistic production, based on our conditions, is found in the essence of socialism."[86] This is not a small difference since it signaled a shift in the types of logics that would be used to justify cultural work production and aesthetic value judgments. Instead of being inspired and educated, in praxis, by the people, the worker, and the peasant, cultural workers were asked to reflect on socialism, its teachings, and its dogmas. Moreover, the "Thesis" asserted that the most vital aspect of socialism was the scientific certainty on a person's perfectibility, implying that reflecting on socialism meant reflecting on the transformation and transformability of the people. This signals a change in the way the PCC understood the relationship between cultural workers (and the cultural institutions they represented) and the people. Instead of following the people's tastes and values and learning from them, cultural workers were asked to see the people as the raw material

from which socialism could be built. Therefore, I argue, while the revolutionary hermeneutics of the 1960s was evidently optimistic about the role the people could play in redeeming cultural workers from their latent capitalistic tendencies, the revolutionary hermeneutics of the mid-1970s placed more emphasis on a centralized version of "the noble, the beautiful and the useful." Instead of being led by the people, cultural workers were asked to follow socialism and to abide by an elitist and centralist ethics of social responsibility.

Institutionalization and centralism continued in 1976 with the promulgation of the *Constitution of the Republic of Cuba* (*Constitución de la República de Cuba*) that included a chapter dedicated to culture and education and, in the same year, with the formation of the Ministry of Culture headed by Armando Hart Dávalos. Hart was a seasoned cultural administrator who had been in charge throughout the 1960s of the Ministry of Education when the Ministry of Education included the Cultural Directorate (Dirección de Cultura) and was thus responsible for administering culture. Like Guevara, head of ICAIC, Hart had strong and prolific opinions on the topics of cultural policy, opinions that were made permanent in speeches, essays, and books on culture in a revolutionary society. His views shaped the role the Ministry of Culture would play in the Cuban cultural field by establishing administrative parameters to the relationship between cultural workers and the material basis and resources of the Ministry.[87]

To this day, the Ministry has the general goals of administering economic, material, technological, pedagogical, and human resources related to the field of culture.

In particular, the Ministry organizes artistic education, at all educational levels, promotes culture (e.g., organization of cultural events, advertising of cultural works), and oversees cultural corporations (e.g., recording studios, publishing) and institutions (e.g., ICAIC, Casa, UNEAC). According to Hart, the general objectives of the Ministry were to set up a cultural infrastructure capable of, on the one hand, making the Cuban people participants in the production and enjoyment of culture and, on the other hand, developing individual talent.[88]

The infrastructure to "massify" culture included many organizations and initiatives. To this end, the Ministry organized a research institute of popular culture named Atlas of Traditional Popular Culture (Atlas de la Cultura Popular Traditional) that would allow academics to understand the significance of popular cultures. Massification was also carried on through basic cultural institutions like the Houses of Culture (Casas de la Cultura), libraries, theaters, bookstores, choirs, museums, and music and dance organizations that could become spaces where Cubans could become involved in culture. The Ministry also administered the Movements of Aficionado Artists (Movimientos de Artistas Aficionados) that were organizations in which amateur artists could receive training and could construct communities of individuals like them. These organizations included festivals, contests, and events to encourage and reward cultural production at all levels. In a similar style were Workshops of Popular Art (Talleres de Arte Popular) where artisan techniques and crafts could be studied and taught. Other traditional cultural activities were enlisted in the massification of culture,

including book publishing and distribution, which constituted a fundamental medium for the ongoing education of all Cubans.

In terms of fostering the development of individuals, the Ministry relied on art schools and artistic organizations like the Movement of the Nueva Trova (the Movimiento de la Nueva Trova that organized musicians and songwriters), the Saíz Brothers Brigade (that organized literary and filmic enterprises), the Raúl Gómez García Brigade, and the UNEAC (that organized literary communities). These specialized organizations and institutions were set to encourage the flow of aesthetic ideas and the constitution of communities of cultural workers that, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and of the State, could create a lively and revolutionary culture.

As Castro and Guillén had understood at the outset of the 1960s, according to Hart, revolutionary culture could be produced only through a revolutionary hermeneutics capable of showing cultural workers the needs and desires of the Cuban people (124). Thus, the Ministry encouraged the participation of professional cultural workers (in particular artists, filmmakers, and writers) in amateur organizations by creating structural links between mass cultural organizations and professional cultural organizations. Accordingly, artists who showed or performed their work in festivals and other community-organized cultural events or writers and filmmakers who participated in workshops for amateurs and aficionados were perceived as properly performing their social role in revolutionary Cuba. Ideally, from the contact with aficionados and fans, cultural workers could learn how to produce work that could communicate with the

"masses" as well as to gather inspiration for their work from the people. Not surprisingly, in the Ministry, artistic quality was understood not simply as the result of the artwork's intrinsic aesthetic characteristics. The work's sociality and the workers' social role were also determinants of quality. To Hart, the cultural worker's product certainly depended on talent and creative capacity as well as on professionalism and technical proficiency, but, in addition, the quality work depended on the social esteem the artist inspired in the people and on the community contact the artist had to her/his community (124).

Hart's ideas created a normative definition of cultural work and cultural workers that, though inspired by ideas from the beginning of the Revolution, shifting the phenomenological and epistemological role that the masses would play in the subjectivities of cultural workers. While in the 1960s the masses were seen as having the potential to redeem the artist from the bourgeois past, from the 1970s onwards the masses were seen simply as the artist's inspiration and audience.

Conclusion

Reviewing some historical events that marked the cultural field in Cuba from 1959 to the 1980s reveals a series of shifts regarding cultural policy and normative ideas about cultural communities and cultural workers. Early organization of intellectuals along pre-revolutionary lines instituted a hierarchical model for cultural communities based on a limited set of ideological components. Those who had belonged to

communist and radical organizations before 1959 moved to the top of the new cultural institutions and organizations. Despite the high idealism of the new leadership, the celebration of praxis over theory became another ideological component that stratified cultural organizations and that justified some cultural experimentations with different strategies of social engineering. The invasion of the Bay of Pigs gave the cultural leadership the opportunity to re-emphasize national security as a key element of proper civic behavior and cultural production. Soon after, "Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing" became an ethical and aesthetic map that some cultural workers would have to draw, and most cultural workers would have to follow. Helping draw this ethical and aesthetic map was a revolutionary hermeneutics that the cultural vanguard would use to ascertain the social and ideological value of cultural work and cultural policy. The revolutionary hermeneutics of the 1960s required the use of an interpretative framework that considered the values, needs, and tastes of the people and that simultaneously accounted for the need of the Revolution to survive. This survival could only be guaranteed when each Cuban became a revolutionary; thus, the transformation of the Cuban people into revolutionaries was a key task of the revolutionary hermeneutics.

The 1960s ended with censorship and disillusionment. The Padilla case and the failed ten-million-ton harvest prompted the Sovietization of society and of culture. Despite the dynamic role gender began to play in cultural production in the decade, centralism and institutionalization were the undercurrent themes of those years' cultural

policies and were reflected in key speeches in congresses and the creation in 1976 of the Ministry of Culture. While, according to Hart, the Ministry never attempted to produce normative ideas on aesthetics nor to limit artistic experimentation, the Ministry's vast set of functions in the cultural field could not have been carried out without the explicit understanding, by those working under the Ministry, of specific aesthetic and ideological notions that could be used to evaluate processes, cultural workers, and specific cultural works. These notions were aesthetically conservative, ideologically-laden, and politically instrumental. While official culture was understood, since 1959, as having the role of shaping the Cuban people, other types of non-official culture coexisted (cultural workers and cultural work that understood their social role different from the orthodoxy) in the same institutions. During the period of 1970 to 1985, the amount of non-official culture decreased, reducing the scope of experimentation.

Centralization and institutionalization brought a different revolutionary hermeneutics to the center. While the revolutionary hermeneutics of the 1960s was optimistic of the role the people could play in leading cultural workers towards a popular and transformative aesthetics, the revolutionary hermeneutics of mid-1970s placed more emphasis on a centralized version of aesthetic and ideological values. Instead of being led by the people and being asked to emulate the values of peasants and laborers, cultural workers were asked to follow socialist precepts and to abide by an elitist and centralist ethics of social responsibility.

Implied in this shift is a change of ideas about the need to provide the cultural workers with social experiences that could change their subjectivities. In the 1960s, it was common to think of the cultural worker as occupying a partly alienated subject position. Given that capitalist and/or imperialist institutions and ideas formed most workers, the first generation of cultural workers was seen as, unavoidably and at times unintentionally, complicit with the preservation of pre-revolutionary values. Accordingly, and despite being asked to assume also vanguard positions, cultural workers were expected, at least theoretically, to transform themselves from bourgeois intellectuals to revolutionary vanguards. In order to accomplish this change, they were asked to embrace a revolutionary hermeneutics that could help them "see" the world anew and see it in accordance to the needs and desires of the Cuban masses, the *raison d'etre* for the Cuban Revolution. Crafting this hermeneutics could not be accomplished using theory or aesthetic experimentation. Cultural workers would have to do more; they would have to interact with the people, learn their ways, tastes, values, and needs, and from these interactions they would be able to outfit a new de-alienated subjectivity, see the world anew, and produce truly revolutionary culture. Moreover, they would have to learn to narrativize their work and their social value without reference to freedom and autonomy. Their distinction would more likely be based on ideas of civic responsibility and political glory. To be a true revolutionary artist, the narrative would tell, one needs to embrace the power of art to shape ideologically the viewer, the audience, and/or the reader.

The institutionalization process of the 1970s placed Soviet-influenced socialist doctrine at the center of the revolutionary hermeneutics in a sense replacing "the people." In this new system of ideas, the people no longer embodied the goals of the Revolution; instead, socialist theory and dogma provided these goals, and the people became the targets of culture, the material that socialism would use to fuel the Revolution.

Although cultural workers used hermeneutic techniques to negotiate their position in the social grid, to show compliance with the government's rules, and to justify their actions to themselves, these revolutionary hermeneutic techniques did not simply appear. They had to be developed from specific knowledges. Since 1959, several important debates occupied most of the discussions about culture and art and these developed knowledge traditions proper to the period. These debates were about the following: the role of the intellectual in a communist/socialist society; the definition of works that can be considered revolutionary film, literature, or art; the proper objects of filmic and artistic reflection; and the policing of cultural products. In the next chapter, I investigate the way these topics were discussed in Cuba from 1959 to 1985.

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[1] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image: Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 79-81. Nuestro Tiempo played a central role in the cultural milieu of the 1950s, housing an important group of communist intellectuals, some of which participated in the Rebel Army.

[2] 1945 marked the triumph of the Labour Party in England, 1949 the victory of Mao in China, 1950 the Korean War. Each event catalyzed the intellectual communities around the world and produced deep separations between those in the right and those in the left. Robert V. Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism and the World: From Revolution to Collapse* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1994). In North America, McCarthyism was at work but so was the Civil Rights Movement. See Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 21-60.

[3] At different times Cuba's political system has been labeled as either communist or socialist. During the 1960s it was quite common to think of the political transformation of Cuba as one consisting of three stages: from capitalism, to socialism, to reach eventually communism. This was partly the result of the influence of Che Guevara who insisted that the goal should be communism. During the 1970s and onwards, the political structure is often considered as simply socialist and so are the goals the government has had for the future of Cuba.

[4] Seymour Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas. Press, 1975).

[5] Antonio Benítez Rojo, "'Narrativa de la Revolución Cubana' de Seymour Menton," *Vuelta* (Febrero 1986): 42-45; Liliana Martínez Pérez, "Los Riesgos de la Identidad en Cuba," *Perfiles Latino Americanos* 3, no. 4 (Junio 1994): 169-92; Carlos Ripoll, *Harnessing the Intellectuals: Censoring Writers and Artists in Today's Cuba* (Washington: Cuban American National Foundation, 1985); Roger Reed, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba* (Geneva, Switzerland: Latin American Round Table, 1991); Georgina Dopico Black, "The Limits of Expression: Intellectual Freedom in Postrevolutionary Cuba," *Cuban Studies* 19 (1989): 107-142.

[6] In Chapter 7, I look at how ideas regarding freedom of expression were used as a way of approaching the interpretation of Cuban films. See the sections on *Memories* and Conclusion of that chapter.

[7] From here on, I will group together all artists, writers, filmmakers, designers, editors, journalists, critics, and musicians under the category of "cultural workers." Accordingly, what they produce will be labeled "cultural work."

[8] It is tempting to use the term Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), in an Althusserian style, to talk about these institutions. However, given that a key ISA is education and that this dissertation does not deal directly with education, I have chosen to refrain from using the term.

[9] Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 37.

[10] Max Azicri, *Cuba: Politics, Economics and Society* (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1988), 30-32. Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 61-82. From January 1, 1959, to the present, the Cuban Revolution has gone through different political stages. In this chapter I follow the lead of some historians who agree on the importance of periodizing the Revolution in the following way: 1959-1961: triumph of the Revolution; 1961-1968: socialism and institutional experimentation; 1968-1970: the harvest of the ten million; 1970-1985: Sovietization or institutionalization of society. Carollee Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba: Between Vision and Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[11] Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 90-95.

[12] Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Mea Cuba* (New York: Plaza & Janes Editors, 1994), 68. Santamaría was one of only two women who participated in the famous attack on Moncada in 1953 (where she lost her brother and fiancée) and became part of Castro's guerrillas in 1956 (71).

[13] Reed, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba*, 40.

[14] *Revolución* became *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Cuban government and the official party. Cabrera Infante, *Mea Cuba*, 64.

[15] Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, 125-129.

[16] Another series of events that would affect the organization of cultural communities was the defection intellectuals and cultural workers. This left a vacuum in Cuban cultural institutions. Among those who left before 1961 were Lino Novás Calvo, Carlos Montenengro, Lydia Cabrera, and Severo Sarduy. See Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, 125.

[17] Ernesto Guevara, "Notas para el Estudio de la Ideología de la Revolución Cubana," in *Pensamineto y política cultural cubanos: Tomo II* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1960]), 16.

[18] The record of official Marxisms' with farmers contradicted Guevara's idealistic position.

[19] In this Chapter, see the section on "Cultural Policing and 'Palabras a los Intelectuales'"; see also the discussion on Chapter 4 regarding the ideal relationship of people to culture. Both sections are evidence of the importance of action. Theory, however, was welcomed. In the cultural realm, theory was required to legitimate institutional activities.

[20] "Creación del Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográfica (ICAIC)," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo IV*, ed. Matilde del

Rosario Sánchez (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1987 [1959]), 7-10.

[21] For an overview of the material published by *Cine Cubano*, see the *Índice de la Revista Cine Cubano 1960-1974*, published by Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in 1975.

[22] About the issue of which literary works were promoted under the Revolution, see Dopico, "The Limits of Expression."

[23] Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba*, 86; Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 1993, 99.

[24] In 1965, the government organized the notorious Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP camps) in which dissidents, homosexuals, and other types of "deviant" citizens were interned. According to Reed, around 34,000 people were confined in these camps at different times. Though officially disbanded in 1966, the UMAP camps operated until the end of the 1960s. Reed, The *Cultural Revolution in Cuba*, 82-85.

[25] Reed's account is different from Cabrera's, though they also resulted in the seizing of the film. Reed, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba*, 55-58.

[26] Cabrera, *Mea Cuba*, 66-67.

[27] The meetings at the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) were on June 16, 23, and 30 of 1961. Fidel Castro Ruz, "Palabras a los Intelectuales," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo I*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1961]), 23-42.

[28] Guevara later commented that he would have reacted differently if the incident had occurred later in the revolutionary process. Guevara cited in Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 101.

[29] "Free cinema" espouses the idea that reality must be recorded as it is, not modified in editing or by the use of obstructive filmmaking.

[30] Though *P.M.* is hard to find in the United States, a part of it can be seen at the end of the film *Before Night Falls* (2000, d. Julian Schnabel).

[31] Although Cuba had began only recently a movement toward socialism, "Palabras" signals the beginning of the adoption of Soviet positions in culture. John Downing , Email to Hector Amaya, July 29, 2003.

[32] Security has been one of the key aspects and ideas around which the modern state has been built, and a closer look to the speech reveals a connection between security and freedom. For a Foucauldian approach to this issue, see the edited collection *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two*

Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[33] Castro, "Palabras a los Intelectuales," 25.

[34] J.D.D. Hutto, "The Story of the Self: The Narrative Basis of Self-Development," in *Ethics and the Subject*, ed. Karl Simms, *Critical Studies* Vol. 8 (Atlanta, Georgia: Rodopi, 1997), 75. For an evaluation of Paul Ricoeur's ideas of self and narrative, see S.H. Clark, "Narrative Identity in Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*," in the same collection.

[35] Clearly, given the importance of political art in the modernist tradition, the artist clearly does not imagine herself/himself free to do whatever. Ethical duties are part of many artistic practices.

[36] Castro, "Palabras a los Intelectuales," 8. My translation here and below.

[37] "Contra la Revolución nada, porque la Revolución tiene sus derechos y el primer derecho de la Revolución es el derecho de existir y frente al derecho de la Revolución de ser y de existir, nadie. Por cuanto la Revolución comprende los intereses del pueblo, por cuanto la Revolución significa los intereses de la Nación entera…" (Castro, "Palabras a los Intelectuales," 28).

[38] I use ideological equivalence to refer to a type of mirroring where the ideology of the Revolution reflected the ideology of the nation.

[39] "Como Haremos," *Casa de las Américas* 1, no. 1 (June-July 1960): 3.

[40] Cabrera, *Mea Cuba*, 52-72.

[41] In 1986 Lisandro Otero became acting president of UNEAC due to Guillén's bad health. And from 1988, Abel Prieto became president. Azicri, *Cuba: Politics, Economics and Society*, 186.

[42] Lisandro Otero, *Cultural Policy in Cuba* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), 37.

[43] Azicri, *Cuba: Politics, Economics and Society*, 185.

[44] Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, 130-134.

[45] Ernesto Guevara, *El Socialismo y el Hómbre Nuevo* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1988), 133.

[46] Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, "12 Notas para las 12 Sillas," *Cine Cubano* 2, no. 6, 17.

[47] Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 130

[48] See Julianne Burton, "Film Artisans and Film Industries in Latin America, 1956-1980: Theoretical and Critical Implications of Variations in Modes of Filmic Production and Consumption," in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 180.

[49] Ernesto Guevara, *El Hombre Nuevo* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, Coordinación de Humanidades, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1978 [1965]), 20.

[50] In interview by the author with Pastor Vega, 2000, in Austin, Texas.

[51] Otero, *Cultural Policy in Cuba*.

[52] Herbert L. Matthews, *Revolution in Cuba: An Essay in Understanding* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 321. For a different take on the issues, see Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, 134-149. For a pro-Cuban interpretation, Mario Bennedeti, “Situación Actual de la Cultural Cubana,” in *Literatura y Arte Nuevo en Cuba* (Barcelona: Editorial Estela, 1971), 7-32.

[53] Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution*, 143.

[54] Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Cuban in the 1970s: Pragmatism and Institutionalization* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), 5.

[55] Cuba also exasperated Latin American leaders, which exacerbated internal problems during the 1960s. See Alfred Padula, "Cuban Socialism: Thirty Years of Controversy," in *Conflict and Change in Cuba*, ed. Enrique A. Baloyra and James A. Morris (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 20-21.

[56] John Downing, Email to Hector Amaya, July 29, 2003.

[57] Mesa-Lago, *Cuban in the 1970s*, 8.

[58] José Luis Rodríguez, *Desarrollo Económico de Cuba (1959-1988)* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1990), 110-111.

[59] Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, 122.

[60] It is important to remark that the two of the films analyzed ahead (*Portrait of Teresa*, and *Up to a Certain Point*) deal directly with machismo and were produced and distributed in Cuba just after the institution of the Family Code.

[61] Fear was justified. Many cases of repression were documented during these years. See Reed, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba*, 99-142

[62] Cuban Cultural Workers, "A los Firmantes de la Carta al Primer Ministro," *Casa de las Américas* 11, no. 67 (July-August 1971): 146-47.

[63] "Declaración de la Casa de las Américas," *Casa de las Américas* 11, no. 67 (July-August 1971): 147-49; "Declaración de los Cineastas Cubanos," *Casa de las Américas* 11, no. 67 (July-August 1971): 149-52; "Declaración de la Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba," *Casa de las Américas* 11, no. 67 (July-August 1971): 153-54.

[64] "Declaración del Primer Congreso de Educación y Cultura," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Matilde del Rosario Sánchez (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1987 [1971]), 212.

[65] Juan Marinello, "Despues del Congreso," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1971]), 216-17.

[66] Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978 [1843]), 41-46.

[67] Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1969): 229-230.

[68] Raúl Castro, "El Diversionismo Ideológico, Arma Sutil Que Esgrimen los Enemigos Contra la Revolución," *Revolución y Cultura* 6 (1972): 7-13.

[69] *Memories* gathered eight prizes that included the following: Special Prize of the Author's Jury, XVI International Film Festival, Czechoslovakia, Karlovy Vary, 1968; FIPRESCI Award (International Federation of Film Journalists), International Film Festival, Czechoslovakia, Karlovy Vary; Official Selection of the London Film Festival, 1971; Rosenthal Award, National Association of Film Critics of U.S.A., New York, 1973. *Lucia* gathered sixteen prizes that included the following: The Gold Medal at Moscow, 1968; Critics Week at Cannes, 1969;

selected as one of the twenty Best Films of the First International Film Festival in Tokyo, Japan, 1970; First Prize Golden Globe at the Film Festival of the Italian Cinemateca, Milan, Italy, 1970; Award of Honor at the 1970 Viennale, Vienna, Austria.

[70] Otero, *Cultural Policy in Cuba*.

[71] Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 256-263.

[72] Julianne Burton, "Film and Revolution in Cuba: The First 25 Years," in *New Latin American Cinema: Volume 2, Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997 [1985]), 133.

[73] Marvin Leiner, *Sexual Politics in Cuba: Machismo, Homosexuality, and AIDS* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 64-65.

[74] Isabel Larguia and John Dumoulin, "Hacia una Ciencia de la Liberación de la Mujer," *Casa de las Américas* 9, no. 65-66 (March-June 1971): 47.

[75] Jean Stubbs, "Revolutionizing Women, Family, and Power," in *Women and Politics Worldwide*, ed. Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 192.

[76] Sheryl L. Lutjens, "Remaking the Public Sphere: Women and Revolution in Cuba," in *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia and the New World*, ed. Mary Ann Tétreault (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 369.

[77] Debra Evenson in Leiner, *Sexual Politics in Cuba*, 67.

[78] Cabrera, *Mea Cuba*.

[79] See Sue Aspinall, "One Way-Or Another: Sue Aspinall Reports on a Recent Weekend School on Cuban Cinema," *Screen* 24, no. 2 (1983): 74-77.

[80] Burton, "Film and Revolution in Cuba," 137-38.

[81] Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 292.

[82] Kelly Anderson and Tamy Gold, "Can We Talk? Cuba Mediamakers Size Up Their Future," *The Independent* 15, no. 1 (January/February 1992): 18.

[83] "Informe Central al I Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba," in *La Lucha Ideológica y la Cultura Artística Literaria*, ed. Nora Madan (La Habana: Editora Política, 1982), 59-65.

[84] "I Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba: Tesis 'Sobre la Cultura Artística y Literaria'," in *La Lucha Ideológica y la Cultura Artística Literaria*, ed. Nora Madan (La Habana: Editora Política, 1982), 72-74.

[85] Castro, "Palabras," 8.

[86] "I Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba: Tesis," 73.

[87] Armando Hart Dávalos, *Las Cartas sobre la Mesa: Cuba Aclara Posiciones* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1984).

[88] Armando Hart Dávalos, “Trabajo Cultural con las Masas,” in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo III*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1981]), 116.

4

Cuban Revolutionary Hermeneutics as Aesthetic Inquiry

U.S. film dominated Cuban screens before 1959. This changed with the advent of the Revolution. With Cuba moving away from capitalism and from American cultural products, Cuban movie theaters began substituting Hollywood fare with films from other nations and their own. For instance, throughout 1963, Cuban movie audiences had been given the opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of quality art films that included works by Luis Buñuel, Andrei Wajda, Akira Kurosawa, Mikhail Romm, Tony Richardson, and Federico Fellini. Box office receipts in 1963 skyrocketed, proving that audiences were more than welcoming of these directors' rich film works.[1] Yet, on December 12, 1963, the newspaper *Hoy*, which was considered the official organ of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and was headed at the time by Blas Roca, published a critique of Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960) that argued that the film could not be considered wholesome entertainment for the Cuban working class. A scant reply signed by ten Cuban directors affiliated with the Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) and Alfredo Guevara was printed in the newspaper *Revolución*. The reply compared the position of *Hoy* with the censoring activities of the Hayes Code in the United States, and the Catholic Church around the world (195). Despite the high rank that Roca enjoyed in the Party, Guevara criticized him, and Fidel Castro supported the criticism (198).

Regardless of their differing positions on Fellini's film, *Hoy* and ICAIC were two cultural institutions that embraced and championed politicized culture. For those working in these areas of officialdom, the overall goal of film, and of all culture, was to shape the Cuban people into revolutionary citizens. The leadership of *Hoy* and ICAIC disagreed, however, in their understanding of the best means by which such a complex and ambitious task could be accomplished. Their theoretical and ideological positions about the role film played in a revolutionary society and about the ideological power of film made their opinions irreconcilable. Hence, the gap fostered debate and signaled power struggles within the political and cultural community. Pierre Bourdieu commented regarding the French context: "Specifically aesthetic conflicts about the legitimate vision of the world—in the last resort, about what deserves to be represented and the right way to represent it—are political conflicts…for the power to impose the dominant definition of reality."[2] This can be extended to this particular Cuban example, as conflicting ideas of culture, aesthetics, and ideology were also at stake in this case. As I discussed in Chapter 3 and as is illustrated in the above example, the relaxed attitude of ICAIC would become hegemonic during most of the 1960s; yet, during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, *Hoy*'s conservative and dogmatic attitude would prevail, though not without opposition.

As I have been arguing, in order to reflect on the Cuban cultural field and its *habitus* (two levels that form the material and ideatic contexts of official reception), it is necessary to investigate the discourses about culture that official institutions and/or

communities fostered and the type of aesthetics that they favored. This is key to determining the "lifestyle" marked by the *habitus* and necessary if I am to argue later that official reception was performed (or not) according to technologies of public selfhood. Moreover, these discursive spaces shed light on the phenomenological and hermeneutic relationship between films and historically situated official readers and are clues to the power relations in which these readers and the films were immersed. Finally, these spaces helped form specific, politically situated ways of knowing the world and of interpreting culture; the ideas they engendered were likely used to place limits on the community of cultural workers and/or vanguard. For these reasons, ideas about culture and aesthetics can illuminate how cultural workers negotiated self-understanding and how workers brokered for positions within the field.

In this chapter, I continue exploring the ways in which Cuban cultural *habitus* centered around internally and externally imposed principles and the manner in which these principles guided their actions, defined cultural policies, and structured institutional activities. While the previous chapter examined the general development and evolution of the cultural field in terms of key institutions, historical events, and games of position-taking, here I examine six discourses that, I argue, deeply influenced the constitution of film and film interpretation as acts of public self-formation.

The analysis of discourses, in particular discourses that relate closely to definitions of individuality, citizenship, and self, complements institutional analyses. In and of itself, the analysis of institutions tends to shed light on the ways subjection was

accomplished, ideologies were reconstituted, and hegemony was achieved. Institutional analyses, as discussed in Chapter 2, tend to reflect top-down vantage points and, I argue, overemphasize normativity. I do not deny the usefulness of these approaches, since they are politically committed, often on the side of justice, and produce useful illustrations of the overarching power of the social over the individual at historically specific times. However, I am interested in exploring the intersection of the social and individual from a dialectic point of view and assume, with Michel Foucault and Bourdieu, that power is disseminated throughout society and that social structures and *habitus* are dynamic and changeable. Moreover, if freedom is understood as a cultural concept, then practices can and do exist in the realm of freedom. The discourses that are discussed below are part of the *habitus* in which cultural workers practiced their crafts. The discourses are particularly important because they related to freedom and agency and included definitions of selfhood and individuality based on social practices. That is, they helped individuals evaluate cultural work by providing aesthetic, epistemological, and ethical frameworks. But more importantly, they established that performing such evaluations would bring them closer to becoming a new person, de-alienated and free.

The first of these discourses refers to the politicization of culture. Because of this politicization, cultural actions (or activities) and cultural texts were often seen primarily as political actions and political texts/speech. The second refers to the overall goal of culture which was to shape Cubans into revolutionaries. This goal provided a general telos to cultural activities and texts and infused them with historically specific values.

The telos, however ambiguous or contingent, helped establish whether actions and/or texts had the right type of politics. The next discourses correspond to the "areas of debate" introduced in the previous chapter: the role of the intellectual in a communist/socialist society, the definition of revolutionary art (literature, theater, and film), and the proper objects of artistic reflection. Lastly, I comment on two discourses underlying the previous debates: what is the ideal relationship between people and culture and what is the proper way of policing culture? Together, these discourses shaped what I have called a revolutionary hermeneutics and aesthetics by providing official cultural workers with legitimate ways of evaluating artistic work and artistic/cultural practice. In addition, these discourses produced specific types of knowledges, and these knowledges were used as heuristic devices to answer questions regarding whether cultural work could or could not fulfill the political goal of transforming the citizenry.

Discourse 1: The Politicization of Cultural Work and Workers

Since the beginning of the Revolution, culture became politicized, and those who produced it and interpreted began to be seen as political workers. This is evidenced in the importance the incoming government gave to the creation of cultural institutions.[3] Both, ICAIC and Casa de las Américas, were created during the first year, and ICAIC was seen as providing a fundamental link between government and people.[4] In addition,

ICAIC, as described in Law 169, was to serve as an ideological chisel that would shape Cubans into revolutionaries or, at least, supporters of the Revolution.

Accordingly, film production and film criticism were defined as political activities that could further, or hinder, the goals of government. This explains the type of review a film like *La Dolce Vita* would receive from *Hoy* and the type of defense that ICAIC had to issue. In framing all culture as political, the new hegemony defined a framework of cultural interpretation and a proper horizon of expectations. Since all cultural works were political, it was necessary to ask, what politics did cultural works embrace, and how was politics manifested in specific works, what were the political goals of cultural works, how did the politics of cultural works relate to the politics of the government? These questions and their answers engendered a style of cultural interpretation and became a mental template that reviewers and cultural workers would often, if not always, use when engaging cultural work. In a very real sense, the idea "culture is political" occupied the center of the horizon of expectations of cultural workers.

Culture was not only seen as political but it was also seen as politics. Since the activities of film production and criticism were eminently political, cultural criticism was often practiced as an activity that highlighted the political positioning of cultural producers and criticism, and it was used as a political weapon against perceived enemies. The *P.M.* debate illustrates this practice (see Chapter 3). As discussed, the debate was less about the film text and its political underpinnings than it was about the

social and power relationships between ICAIC and the staff of Lunes de Revolución.[5] According to Cabrera Infante, Guevara was simply jealous of *Lunes'*s success and used *P.M.* to eliminate it.[6] Even Heberto Padilla's problems resulted from a tactical and political error. He dared to criticized the literary accomplishments of Lisandro Otero, the vice-president of National Cultural Council (Consejo Nacional de Cultura, CNC). In a sense, cultural texts became political mediations between those authorized to produce culture and, thus, authorized to evaluate it publicly. In most cases this factor did not have an impact in criticism since the community of cultural workers tried, like any other community, to solve problems internally (the reshuffling of workers from Lunes to other institutions, for instance, was not discussed publicly). Yet, in cases of ongoing political discord, cultural texts were used to punish, criticize, and politically attack the producer(s).[7]

A side effect of the politicization of culture was that the power and social responsibility of the cultural community grew in proportion to its perceived potential to influence the population.[8] For instance, while "Palabras" fostered the consolidation of the cultural field by providing clearer cultural guidelines, it did so by re-asserting the conviction that governing Cuba required the use of culture and art as political tools.[9] This conviction translated into more responsibility placed on cultural workers (who would then be monitored in relation to the potential influence specific works could have on the people) as well as into more power. As long as this was the hegemonic idea, cultural institutions would be supported by the government economically and

ideologically. For instance, the organization of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, UNEAC), and of other institutions after "Palabras," meant also the creation of a growing cultural bureaucracy that would have the power, at least ideally, to regulate all Cuban culture and to act as gatekeepers of the cultural realm. In their gatekeeping role, cultural institutions promoted and contained the professional careers of most cultural workers.[10] While culture that was not politicized was thereafter allowed to exist (within the Revolution), revolutionary politicized culture was seen as the epitome of creation and the only "necessary" culture. Those cultural workers that produced "revolutionary culture" were expected to be highly political and this characteristic was well regarded by the Cuban government and its institutions. Defining revolutionary culture as the only "necessary" culture had a real effect on the workers' life since it determined employment and funding. Hence, though all citizens were expected to acquire a revolutionary consciousness, some additional expectations, issued by the government but mediated by cultural institutions, were placed on cultural workers. Writers, filmmakers, artists, critics, and musicians, jointly with the political leadership, were expected to structure cultural institutions and produce cultural life that could promote the transformation of the general population into revolutionary citizens and, thus, were expected to see their work as political and act as if culture was political.

Cuba's use of culture as a political tool to aid government was something hardly unique. In fact, governing through the arts and culture was (and is) a common political

technique that makes evident the modernist roots of Cuba's political system. According to Colin Gordon, contemporary forms of government take freedom and the "souls of their citizens" as the objects of government.[11] To model the ethical life of free subjects becomes an ongoing concern and goal of government. Foucault suggests that such goals were difficult to achieve and required governors who knew and used the right techniques of governance .[12] The study of such techniques since the eighteenth century resulted in an array of disciplines, like criminology, urbanism, and pedagogy, that were able to produce "fields of knowledge" *about* people, society, and individuals. The production of these knowledges, in turn, engendered discursive and social spaces where particular types of subjects could exist, subjects who could function as citizens.

Aesthetics was among these disciplines since the nineteenth century, and through the ideas of Friedrich Schiller and Matthew Arnold, to mention two influential figures in Germany and England, aesthetics had organized philosophical and social discourses partly concerned with the crafting of better individuals through the arts and the "aesthetic experience."[13] Art institutions, such as museums, incorporated into their functioning the principle of crafting individuals into better citizens and, therefore, became essential to the modernist project of governing the "souls of their citizens." The multiplication of governing disciplines altered ideas about citizenship and fostered a reliance on art and mass culture to produce in citizens the desire to be governed. Toby Miller states: "Citizenship is an open technology, a means of transformation ready for the definition and disposal in dispersed ways at dispersed sites…It produces a

'disposition' on [the citizens'] part not to accept the imposition of a particular form of government passively, but to embrace it actively as a collective expression of themselves."[14] It is in the context of the production of "dispositions" that art and culture became, in modernity, an answer to the question of how to govern. Culture and art teach individuals how to become citizens, and, Miller observes, culture and art have the advantage of being able to govern from afar (24) and, I would add, across time. It is culture and art that engender the desire for self-formation, cultivation, and the *Bildung* that Hans-Georg Gadamer sees as the most important idea of the eighteenth century and that served to anchor most political revolutions.[15]

However, most culture and most art existed within capitalist societies and responded to questions of governance quite foreign to Cuba's changing needs. As Bourdieu commented on relation to art and art institutions in France, these institutions relied on Kantian ideas of disinterestedness to produce distinctions among classes.[16] The artistic gaze, which implied the disinterested contemplation of the work of art, was a marker of distinction and thus an activity of self-interest. The reproduction of social classes and distinction fulfilled the roles of government since it reproduced a *habitus* that naturalizes the existing social order and legitimizes class distinctions.[17]

In Cuba, the coming to power of a new government and a new economic, social, and political system required the creation of cultural institutions significantly different from those before the Revolution (institutions not based on capitalism). Technologies of governance that could utilize aesthetics to engender a new normative culture were not

readily available to the cultural vanguard. Indeed, the new regime required a new aesthetics that could produce new markers of distinction regarding taste. As I show, this aesthetics was politicized and most of it rejected Kantian ideas about art. One of the reasons why it is so interesting to research Cuba's cultural development during the first decades after the Revolution is precisely because Cuba's community of cultural workers had to produce the conditions of production, distribution, and consumption of cultural texts that could create new classes of citizens. The new politicized culture would have to inspire *Bildung*, revolutionary citizenship, and support of the government; it would have to produce a new *habitus*, new sets of dispositions, and new principles that could be applied as universals in order to judge cultural works.[18] Aside from the administrative decisions that this setup required, it was also necessary to produce new sets of knowledges that would facilitate and guide the decision-making process of those involved in administration and that could serve as theoretical grounds for universal principles. These knowledges were broadly applicable to general questions and to issues of value. They were crafted in cultural institutions by discussions often concerned with aesthetics. Implicit in these discussions was the idea that art and culture could, given the right aesthetics (and thus the right politics), fulfill the goals of the Revolution. Also implicit was the idea that the right aesthetic principles could legitimize, to the PCC and to the people, institutions and the cultural activities promoted by them. They would, of course, also legitimize the vanguard.

Discourse 2: Culture as Transformation

The Revolution made culture political because the leading cadres believed that culture could transform Cuba into a developed, socialist, and law-abiding nation. In their view, this idealist project required a new type of Cuban, a new type of citizen, one who would make it his/her personal goal to construct, defend, and protect the nation, one who would embody a new set of dispositions. Since coercion could not be used to bring about these changes (the ghosts of the CIA and the organized militias of exiles loomed close), the Cuban leadership used culture to produce in the population the desire to be allied of government in the transformation of Cuba and themselves. As Richard R. Fagen comments, the creation of the new Cuban citizen depended on the implementation of a new culture, a culture in which the political and the personal would be interrelated and encompassed by the revolutionary. [19] Fagen identifies five levels at which the transformation of the citizenry occurred and the way these levels of ideological work changed Cuba's political culture and, I would add, the field of culture itself:

> 1. The transformation of Cuban man into revolutionary man is one of the primary goals of the revolutionary leadership. Both the radicalism and the continuity of the revolution are best understood as deriving from this commitment.
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> 2. On a national scale, these attempted individual transformations add up to a policy of directed transformation of the political culture of Cuba. Political culture is here understood to include patterns of action as well as states of mind; additionally, the revolutionary movement itself has politicized and thus made relevant to our inquiry previously nonpolitical domains of action.
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> 3. The primary mechanism for effecting individual and cultural transformation is directed participation in revolutionary institutions. These institutions serve both as

> instruments for facilitating social change and as testing grounds for changes thought to have already been accomplished.
>
> 4. Not all the participatory activity directed by the revolutionary leadership has as its primary purpose the transformation of social character and political culture. Much of it is more narrowly practical, the mobilizing of citizens' energies to perform specific developmental tasks.
>
> 5. The Cuban effort is embedded in and draws meaning from a symbol system in which images of struggle and utopia loom large. By means of the evolving ideology of "the new man" and the part he plays and will play in the transformation of society, the mundane, day-to-day world is linked with visions that are more global, abstract, and lasting (16-17).

As in the crafting of any other *habitus*, this one included meaning-systems (point 5), meaningful activities (point 3 and 4), and pedagogic techniques (points 2 through 5). The *habitus* had the goal of producing a new revolutionary citizen, and its importance shaped policy and institutions. This goal also impacted the definition of "citizenship" by shaping and transforming a diverse set of individual practices, such as playing a sport, and characteristics, such as virility, and giving them explicit political meanings.[20] Institutions were instrumental to this process since it was through institutions that daily revolutionary practices were inserted in everyday life. Echoing Fagen, Tzvi Medin comments that the Cuban leaders addressed the issue of forming a revolutionary consciousness by creating institutions of change and transformative practices. The leadership organized the literacy campaign of 1960-1961, which helped shape educational goals and gave an opportunity to inculcate revolutionary principles. They structured the army and people's militias with training that included a significant amount of ideological elements. They controlled the media and the way it represented

current affairs, including cinema, with the documentary, the newsreel, and the fictional film each providing distinctive elements of indoctrination.[21]

The process of the transformation of citizenship was not without internal challenges and difficulties, and Castro and the Cuban government understood that to be successful they would have to act with caution and to look for *alliances* with the people. One common tactic used to achieve this goal was to integrate Cubans into revolutionary institutions by supporting activities related to the already existing identities of specific groups, thereby tapping into existing subjections to implement revolutionary practices. For instance, the government, particularly in the early stages of the revolution, supported intellectuals by organizing cultural life and events such as dance, song festivals, literature contests, and, of course, cinema screenings all over the nation. The strategy at once secured the role of the government as the provider of culture while allowing the government to regulate culture.[22] Similarly, in other areas of life such as labor, sports, and politics, the government supported and instituted equality for women and organized institutions that would guarantee women's presence in the political apparatus and would secure a role for the government in the same organizations.[23] Finally, it developed labor unions, some of which preceded the Revolution but that were slowly substituted by new government-controlled organizations such as the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (Confederación de Trabajadores Comunistas, CTC) during the first half of the 1960s (102-107).

Forming alliances with the people through institutions was only one tactic applied by the government; the overall strategy to produce a new citizen was a more subtle process and required the work of the citizens themselves. To put it succinctly, the strategy was to incite Cubans to introject the principles of the revolution by arousing in each individual a desire to become a new citizen, a new woman or man, a new subject to the law, and a new agent of freedom. Introjection was fundamental to the ongoing and relatively smooth transformation of Cuban society. And addressing the already mentioned paradox (the mutual constitution of subject and ideology), two distinct but related processes came together, governance and self-formation or rather governance through self-formation.

To ignite new desires, to use the language of romance, the Cuban project worked with old objects of desire like freedom, justice, courage, and virility, re-positioning these idea-objects within the discourse of the revolution with the goal of producing, at least, a refracted interpellation. The meaning of freedom, for instance, was linked to new exemplars and gradually fused to revolutionary goals. One instance of such political and discursive tactics is found in the speech that Castro used after the bomb raids of April 16, 1961, to denounce the American and "gusano"[24] aggression and where he declared (for the first time) the revolution as socialist. Almost all of his speech was dedicated to denouncing the Bay of Pigs attack. Only in passing, almost as a side commentary, did he announce that the revolution was (and at that moment the revolution became) a "socialist revolution."[25] By emphasizing the aggression Castro

framed the historical transition in terms of rebellion, of freedom and survival; socialism was embraced as the reaction of reason against American moral corruption. The resulting discursive formations were testament to Castro's political savvy engendered by this and other speeches as well as official communiqués where socialism, rebellion, and freedom intertwined, switched positions, and often became interchangeable. He connected Cuban socialism to Cuba's freedom, giving Cubans in these two new (yet old) objects of desire, a rationale for its existence. As a general rule, these key technologies of governance used by the Cuban government involved the deployment in formal and informal education (such as media, art, political meetings, and speeches) of discourses supporting the ideological changes and establishing a hegemonic relation between societal groups and government.

Medin identifies the three following discursive patterns that served as the cognitive, conceptual, emotional, terminological, and axiological platforms of the revolution and that served to legitimize it (13). The first discourse he calls "existence as confrontation" where "the military" and the ideal epic values of militancy were inscribed in everyday actions (31). The ethical discourse of militancy constituted a way of looking at life in terms of battle, defense, the sovereignty of the nation, and the logic of sacrifice. Daily activities were reframed as daily opportunities to be heroic. Castro compared such ethics to Christian ethics and clearly implied an ascetics that sought to infuse individual activities with a collective tenor; it implied an ethical frame that could be used always and could potentially be applied to everything (33).

A second discourse was that of "manicheism." Its logic helped shape the Cuban identity in an "us versus them" style and made use of stereotypes that defined the enemy in hyper-negative terms. Within this discourse, the U.S. was placed along the side of and served as support for counterrevolutionaries, capitalism, imperialism, and the "gusano." Medin argues that "Manicheasm not only totalizes confrontation but also neutralizes any internal heterogeneity. . . it imposes an exclusive self-image" (42). Therefore, and using the ideas of Benedict Anderson about nationhood, manicheism is deeply invested in the discursive constitution of the Cuban national identity by defining boundaries and a community through the imaginary relation of all Cubans as defenders of what is good and what is Cuban.[26]

The third discourse is that of Marxism-Leninism, which was fused with Cuban nationalism. The fusion was achieved through the strategic use of symbols of which the clearest is Fidel Castro. Castro was what Medin calls an "integrative symbol" used to mark the equivalence of discreet discourses and to legitimize each and every one of them.[27] To follow Castro meant to follow the Revolution, to follow the Nation, anti-imperialism, justice, and Marxism-Leninism. According to Medin, the coming together of discourses and the logical procedures by which such discourses came together "creates equivalencies that in fact condition in advance all possible reasoning" (58). It is important to mention, however, that Castro's symbolic power could not have been possible without what Carollee Bengelsdorf calls the "verticalization of political power," a political structure that guaranteed the centrality of Castro and his accolades

and that made outsiders of the rest of the people.[28] Within this system of power distribution, Cubans had no option but to gaze directly to the towering figure (continuing the vertical metaphor) of Castro and his power. Irving Horowitz argues also that Castro's symbolic power is related to his style of leadership that Horowitz labels "caudillista" and to Castro's "charismatic," as opposed to bureaucratic, type of government.[29]

While these discourses targeted all of the population, they also became standard ways of seeing reality among the cultural workers who often used the discourses as templates for cultural creation and cultural criticism. Each of the films studied in this dissertation presents examples of a view of existence as confrontation, manicheism, and Marxist-Leninism. *Lucia*, for instance, is composed of three stories narrating the role three different women named Lucia played in three different Cuban revolutions. The story of *Memories of Underdevelopment* is enriched by the protagonist's anguish and/or impotence at having to take sides either with the Revolution or with his own bourgeois values. *One Way or Another*, *Portrait of Teresa*, and *Up to a Certain Point* deal with issues of gender as seen through Marxism-Leninism and the doctrine of the Revolution.

In addition to being present in many, if not most, Cuban cultural texts after 1959, these three discourses also set the basis for institutional policies. For instance, the Department of Artistic Programming of ICAIC held a series of meetings during July 1963 in order to discuss issues surrounding artistic and film creation from theoretical and practical perspectives.[30] As was common at the time, this group of ICAIC workers,

which included Humberto Solas, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Sara Gómez, and Pastor Vega (directors of the films previously mentioned), issued a joint declaration during the concluding meeting published later in the journal *Cine Cubano*. This document makes use of the three discourses mentioned by Medin in relationship to aesthetic problems. According to the text, ideas and aesthetic tendencies exist in struggle, and art's development is determined by such ideological confrontations. While the existence of ideological confrontations presupposes the coexistence of several aesthetic discourses, the participants nevertheless argued for a Manichean understanding of culture and declared that "there is only one culture," and this culture would be the result of the dialectic between bourgeois and proletariat culture. This position was and is common to Marxist aesthetics, which was the theoretical foundation of the declaration. In this case in point, Marx is used as an integrative symbol to support the arguments of the document. But also supporting the arguments was the PCC's Manifesto, linking Marx and the PCC at the ideological level.

Legitimating arguments by producing symbolic equivalences and oppositions was a tactic commonly used by the leadership to great effect. In Castro's speech, after the Bay of Pigs invasion, he used "games" of equivalences and linked the word freedom and socialism together with others like sacrifice and "gusano." In using this tactic, Castro and the leadership opened up spaces for subjectivities that would respond to socialism in the same way they would respond to freedom and sacrifice. Given the insistence of these ideological offers throughout the years, and the material and social

incentives given to those that responded accordingly, one can argue that the revolutionary consciousness to be created thereof incorporated and displayed its ethical elements accordingly as acts of rebellion, freedom, and justice. To be ethical, to be Cuban, and to fight for freedom and justice were vital to the political culture of the revolution and to the constitution of the new Cuban citizenship.

Given that the discourse of freedom framed the transformation of the Cuban consciousness, or at least the attempts at transforming it, it is possible to see the formation of a revolutionary consciousness in Cuba not simply as a process of subjection. Though the new leadership crafted programs to shape the Cuban citizenry and used technologies of governance that sought normalization and regulation, freedom and self-control were key parts of these programs. It is then possible to talk about the revolutionary consciousness as embedded and dependent on techniques of self-formation inextricably linked to agency and to the ethical manipulation of the self by the self. As a body of ethical suggestions, the Revolution positioned itself, and, in so doing, it positioned also the people it governed against the governance of imperialism and used existing definitions of individuality to graft its own. I side with Medin and suggest that whatever success the Revolution had was, at least partly, the result of the government's ability to place the Cuban people not in the role of "subject" but in the role of "ally." In doing so, the leadership made them social actors against American imperialism.

The alliance between Cuba's government and Cuba's people was partly built on shared technologies of governance and self, both aimed at constructing agency, national and individual, against imperialism, and often resulting in making public policy into private goals. In the previous chapter I discussed how some aspects of gender became public policy, and I began discussing the struggle to find an aesthetics that could fulfill public goals while acknowledging the value of individual ways of being, thinking, and seeing the world. The results of this later struggle, however uneven, I called "revolutionary hermeneutics," which was a technique that attempted to investigate the gap that existed between revolutionary goals and people's needs and ways of seeing the world. The following sections examined four discourses and debates that shaped revolutionary hermeneutics and aesthetics and that were key to the constitution of the new field of culture production. They provided cultural workers with revolutionary ways of evaluating artistic work, artistic/cultural practice, and social life. In addition, these discourses produced knowledges used to answer questions regarding whether cultural work(s) could or not fulfill the political goal of transforming the citizenry.

Sets of knowledges

From a governmental point of view, the legitimacy and survival of the Cuban Revolution depended on the transformation of Cuban citizens into revolutionary individuals modeled after Che Guevara's ideal of the New Man. This transformation required two discreet ideological processes: one that targeted the general population,

involving the nurturing of *conciencia*. This process was carried on through discursive tactics, institutional alliances between government and people, the politicization of public spaces, and the politicization of culture. To achieve this first goal of *conciencia*, it was required to undertake a second ideological and foundational process to construct some of the cultural tools[31] that would help cultivate the New Man. These tools would be the result of the activities carried on within cultural institutions like ICAIC, UNEAC, Casa de la Américas, and the education system and that would properly constitute what Bourdieu calls the "field of cultural production."[32] One such set of tools tried to produce coherent explanations (theories) of the relationship of culture and art to society and thus explain and legitimize institutional and personal practices and actions. To arrive at these explanations, the Cuban field of cultural production greatly relied on the ongoing investigation of three theoretical questions: What is the role of the intellectual in the Revolution? What works can be considered revolutionary film, literature, or art? What are the proper objects of filmic and artistic reflection? Underlying these theoretical questions was a fourth issue or set of assumptions about the relationship of people to revolutionary or proper culture. Although in Chapter 3 I already mentioned succinctly some of the ways in which these issues were resolved at different times, the following is a more detailed elaboration.

Discourse 3: The Cultural Vanguard in the Revolution

During the 1960s, cultural workers were concerned with, on the one hand, understanding the ambiguous messages from the government about revolutionary cultural work and the role of the intellectual in the Revolution and, on the other hand, transposing these ideas to the areas of culture evaluation and cultural production.[33] The results were uneven and were revised by the end of the decade and throughout the 1970s partly as the result of the notorious Padilla case and partly as the result of the failed economic reforms of the late 1960s. In regard to the role of the intellectual in the Revolution, discussions often incorporated a set of elements worth mentioning. Arguably the most important element is the idea that the intellectual ought to play a vanguard role in society. As a vanguard, the intellectual was called to perform specific social and personal tasks. Socially, she/he had to lead the people towards revolutionary change, and, personally, she/he had to become an exemplar by embodying the principles of the revolution.

The notion of a vanguard that can lead revolutionary change is common to other socialist revolutions and societies.[34] Regardless of its commonality, this notion rests on a basic paradox, the root of which is politically costly and in need of continuous negotiation. This paradox is the idea that a revolutionary government obeys the will of the people, yet the people are, according to Marxist revolutionary theory, alienated from their reality. Castro expressed this contradiction in “Palabras” and has continued expressing it. In one later version of the paradox, he stated: “And we do not fear to meet

any adversary on the field of ideas. The truth will always emerge victorious in the end. And the task of the revolutionary is first of all to arm the people's minds, arm their minds! Not even physical weapons can avail them if their minds have not been well armed first."[35] This brief passage also expressed two ideas that characterized his idealist vision of Cuba and that naturalized the discursive separation of the revolutionary vanguard from the people. First, a revolutionary is that individual who arms people's minds, such as a cultural producer. Second, the Cuban people needed training to become revolutionaries; they needed "work" and the work needed to be ideological, that is, on the level of subjection. The standards that served as the measure of good citizenship and that the cultural vanguard possessed (at least in principle) involved a readiness to defend the nation, to arm the people, and to provide any enemy a revolutionary response on behalf of Cuba. Accordingly, the main slogan of the Revolution became "Patria o Muerte" ("Nation or Death"), a sinister reminder of the necessity to respond always to an enemy's ideological interpellations with revolutionary fervor.

The task of "arming the people's minds" made the vanguard agents of social change and subjects of great personal and social responsibilities. Personally, the vanguard had to be more advanced ideologically (in order to instill wisely revolutionary philosophy and ideology in all of their works) and more willing to sacrifice than the masses.[36] This ideological advancement required self-reflection, the monitoring of one's activities, and the recognition that pre-revolutionary ways of being and thinking had to

be eradicated. As Nicolas Guillén stated in his speech at UNEAC's send-off event (the First Congress of Writers and Artists), the socialist intellectual must negate herself/himself and must focus on serving the people.[37] As in Christian doctrine, where negation refers to the repressing or suppressing of humanity's out-of-grace state; in Guillén's work negation meant the leaving behind or the suppression of any pre-revolutionary socially-shaped ways of being. According to him, in accordance with Marxist theory, the intellectual reflected consciously or unconsciously the interests of capitalist ideology, and these reflections, if left unattended, would creep into the intellectual's work and hinder its ability to transform the citizenry. Negation and self-reflection were private and personal sacrifices that the revolutionary intellectual, the vanguard, needed to make in order to fulfill her/his social responsibilities of "arming" the people's minds.

Another challenge the vanguard had to face was adapting to the changing social, cultural, and political climates that were quite severe, particularly during the first years of the Revolution. Addressing this point, Ambrosio Fornet, speaking in the Congreso de la Habana in 1968, stated that the fast pace of change of the Revolution made the intellectual aware of his/her ignorance.[38] The quick transformation of the surroundings, the contrasting emotions of enthusiasm and disbelief, the ongoing self-reflection, and the constant questioning of reality made revolutionary Cuba an intellectual challenge that, Fornet suggested, the vanguard had to solve. The solution to the challenge followed the trajectory found in Guillén and Guevara. Reality, Fornet proposed, would

have to be perceived with a different optic, a "decolonized" phenomenological apparatus skeptic of any and all vanguards and able, on the fly, to "direct the masses, conquer nature, and create new visions of reality" (37). The element of skepticism gave an added benefit to "negation," or decolonization; it could allow the cultural vanguard to adapt to changing conditions. It also added a Hegelian element to the process of transformation, typically seen as a Christian trope, that the vanguard had to undergo. Implied in Fornet is the idea that negation (decolonization) was an ongoing process that had to obey the rules of dialectics in order to transform itself (the vanguard's selves) alongside history. Like history to Hegel, this process had a telos, an end, a goal. The intellectual's ultimate achievement would be the creation of the New Man, free and without alienation (35-37). Since the intellectual, Fornet argued, was the consciousness of society, his arguments had societal consequences. The intellectual's achievement, as the consciousness of society, would transform society, liberating it from the shackles of imperialism and the trappings of the capitalist production system, which was the source of alienation.

The importance of sacrifice and the relevance of the "vanguard" in Cuba after the triumph of the Revolution fitted well with the discourse of existence as confrontation and made popular the archetype of the sacrificial revolutionary. In all of the films to be studied, the measure of a good revolutionary is sacrifice or at least a type of ascetics related to discipline and measure. Sergio, from *Memorias*, cannot sacrifice and thus cannot become a revolutionary. All the Lucias (*Lucia*), Teresa (*Portrait of Teresa*), Lina

(*Up to A Certain Point*), and Yolanda (*One Way or Another*) show a willingness to sacrifice and pay the price of the Revolution.[39] For doing so, they are depicted as vanguard characters, as revolutionaries, and as exemplars. In Chapter 5 I will develop further these themes and elaborate on the revolutionary ascetics as depicted in these films.

The willingness to sacrifice (Castro), the necessity to negate oneself (Guillén), and the contrasting emotions resulting from engaging in the Revolution (Fornet) suggest that affect was key to the subject and self formation of the cultural vanguard. Without affect, that is, without an emotional attachment to the Revolution, individuals were unlikely to engage in the hardships involved in becoming a vanguard.[40] Part of the affective elements that sustained the appetite for sacrifice and self-negation were the social rewards of being a vanguard. Institutional leadership, for instance and as commented before, was partly the result of being a good communist. However, and especially during the 1960s, the vanguard was also given in mass media, film, literature, the arts, and political speech an "aura" of perfection quite difficult to resist. Popular representations of the vanguard were consistently heroic, but, in addition, intellectual and political public spaces were full with references of the vanguard's enviable heroism, sacrifice, and responsibility. In intellectual congresses (i.e. Fornet, Guillén), political speeches, and key texts such as the essay "El Hombre Nuevo" by Guevara, the vanguard occupied the highest rank in the new order. Moreover, according to Guevara, participating as a vanguard in the formation of the communist society was a sign that

the individual had a complete social self, that he or she was a fully realized human being, that he or she was without "alienation." Given the strong influence of Guevara during the 1960s, and the parallels of these ideas with religious doctrines, the aura of the vanguard continued growing even after Guevara's death in late 1967. As in Christian doctrine, self-sacrifice in revolutionary Cuba was a sign of salvation.

Beside the ideological and affective characteristics of the vanguard, it is important to mention at least some of its epistemological underpinnings. As commented before, Castro envisioned the vanguard as a political community capable of using revolutionary ideology to foster *conciencia* in the masses. Simultaneously, the vanguard would have to learn from the masses to identify nobility, usefulness, and beauty. To interpret reality from the people's perspective was seen as an epistemological need if the Revolution was going to succeed. Fornet frames this process as a change in optic and cultural de-colonization in order to see and recognize the new reality. Guillén understood this revolutionary hermeneutics as one that emphasized intellectual engagement with reality, using the principle of direct experience and observations from everyday life.[41] Echoing Guevara's ideas, Guillén contended that the intellectual must live, participate, touch, and smell the lives of those who inspire her/his works. She/he must "give herself/himself to the Revolution, in spirit and flesh, like lovers to the beloved one" (78). Similarly, Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, former President of Cuba, argued in a speech that the development of the intellectual is dependent on his or her commitment to be one of the people.[42] Yet, to be one with the people is not simply an experiential

position, but it is also epistemological. Arguing this point, he continued, only knowledge acquired through the people can be real knowledge.

The discourse of self-negation supported these requests for epistemological transformation since they implied the ongoing questioning of knowledge acquired either through the intellectual's formal education or personal experience. Coherence aside, the requests were unrealistic, and the cultural and intellectual works produced by the intellectual hegemony manifested a tendency, quite understandably, to depend on existing representational and hermeneutic techniques. For instance, in fictional film, cultural workers were able to produce formal and thematic innovations only by relying on the narrative and filmic techniques of Italian neorealism, the new wave, classical Hollywood and Mexican film, and third cinema, in particular cinema novo.[43]

Although fully embracing this populist epistemology was hardly possible, the discourse of "knowledge through the people" impacted cultural life. For instance, this discourse partly engendered innovations in film by popularizing certain themes. Acquiring knowledge through the people ignited a new commitment to reflect the lives of the middle and lower classes and to embrace themes that problematized existing social circumstances, both thematics previously unpopular in Cuban film.[44] Starting with films like *Cuba Baila* (1960, d. Julio García Espinosa), which deals with the celebration of the fifteen birthday of a girl who belonged to the "popular classes" (term commonly used in Cuba to refer to the working class), to *Up to a Certain Point* (1983), which uses working-class revolutionary ethics to teach moral lessons, Cuba's film

community represented, examined, commented on, and criticized the "people." In general, the "people" occupied the center of many, if not most, literary and filmic narratives, vindicating the existence of this epistemology.[45] Indeed, while advocating for knowledge only acquired through the people may had been a tall order, most cultural workers were at least committed to reflecting and coming to know the lives of the common people.

A second way in which these epistemological requests affected Cuban cultural life was by providing theoretical support to artistic educational policies and outreach cultural activities. In education, the new government gave significant importance to art and literary education and created, starting in 1960, a great number of art schools and organizations of aficionados. Artistic and literary formal education included the new National School of Art Instructors (Escuela Nacional de Instructores de Arte, 1961) and the Cubanacán National School of Art (Escuela Nacional de Arte de Cubanacán, 1960) in La Havana. In addition, the leadership organized provincial art schools and regional workshops aimed at servicing previously neglected segments of the population.[46] Though these schools were not easily accessible to all, and the ideological background of candidates was used to evaluate them, the schools were free of charge, and students from all social strata were able and encouraged to attend. Besides providing formal artistic education, these schools prepared artists, writers, and musicians to produce revolutionary popular art.[47]

A similar social benefit, but on a larger scale, was achieved by the Movement of Aficionados (Movimiento de Aficionados), which organized amateur artists, filmmakers, writers, musicians, actors, etc. Following a resolution by the Congress of Education and Culture to "massify" culture, political and labor organizations such as the Organization of Communist Youth (Unión de Jovenes Comunistas, UJC) and the CTC began organizing the amateur artists that belonged to their ranks.[48] With the participation of the National Council of Culture (Consejo Nacional de Cultura, CNC), ICAIC, UNEAC, the Academy of Sciences, the School of Literature of the Universidad de La Havana, and the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, among others, these labor and political organizations fostered cultural education, production and distribution between workers, farmers, and youth.[49] They did so through training, workshops, festivals, and exhibits that showcased the talents of otherwise disenfranchised segments of the population. What was an epistemological challenge for some (those intellectuals and cultural workers who were not from the popular classes) became an easier task for cultural workers prepared *by* the Revolution.

In addition to educating the popular classes, the new cultural institutions organized outreach programs in order to take art, film, and literature to the people and used these encounters to learn from the people. One key example was the Grupo Teatro Escambray, an innovative theater troupe organized in 1968, that took the challenge of using theater to examine social issues that directly impacted their audiences.[50] Their plays were put together for specific regions or towns only after the troupe had

conducted sociological and ethnographic research in the region and town (78). Each play was therefore highly localized, historically specific, and often performed in open settings in the town in question. Intrinsic to the philosophy of Teatro Escambray was relying on knowledge acquired through the people as the raw material for aesthetic transformation. To complement such anti-universalistic epistemology, Teatro Escambray's aesthetic philosophy treated theater as a participatory event that depended, for its success, on the audience's opinions and reactions to modulate the narrative (78-80).

Mistrusting universal or abstract knowledge and relying on knowledge that could be acquired through personal experience were two characteristics that furthered the vanguard's pragmatism, discussed in Chapter 3. Understanding the task of the revolutionary intellectual in pragmatic ways was akin to Marxist ideas that placed the intellectual under capitalism squarely within the superstructure. Paul Baran, published in 1961 in the second number of *Casa*, contended that the alienated intellectual worker is the result of capitalism, and, because of this, in a divided labor system, manual labor and intellectual labor are separated.[51] This separation has contributed to the disintegration of the individual, from the point of view of self-development and of social development. In addition, the separation has created an ideological gulf that the intellectual worker tries to maintain by producing myths about the difficulties of intellectual work and by creating alliances with the governing classes. The worker is left with the stigma of undervalued labor and the structural powerlessness that goes with it.

The real intellectual, conversely, constantly tries to relate his/her experience and/or labor to other aspects of human existence. His or her life is a constant reminder that so-called autonomous areas of existence (government, art, literature, politics, economics) can only be understood insofar as they are perceived as components of a totality. The real intellectual, moreover, is in her/his essence a social critic interested in fighting for a more rational and human society. She/he is the consciousness of society; as Fornet would later comment, she/he is, Baran concludes, a heroic figure (14-17). In a Cuban voice, Francisco López Cámara added that abstract consciousness, as exemplified by art and philosophy, serves the interests of the ruling class. Art and philosophy can become constitutive of revolutionary consciousness only when they are reintegrated to praxis and become transformative, autopoetic.[52]

Agreeing with López, the Cuban Mirta Aguirre argued that cultural workers greatly benefited from learning and using dialectic materialism, and, thus, its study should be undertaken by all creators.[53] When this is not possible, she adds, cultural workers should abide by the following two recommendations: first, artists must align themselves with the proletariat. Second, artists must reject all metaphysical and/or abstract conception of men and society. These two principles should help the cultural worker produce work aligned with the Revolution (113).

The cultural vanguard was a community of people with great personal and social responsibility. They were entrusted with the informal ideological education of the Cuban citizenry and were required to serve as examples of sacrifice and *conciencia*. In

addition, they had to serve as intellectual bridges between the reality of the Cuban people and the goals of the Revolution. In return, the cultural vanguard was rewarded with institutional positions and support, and it was discursively constructed as a social archetype of civic responsibility.

Discourse 4: The Aesthetics of Revolutionary Culture

Arming the people's minds and crafting the masses into proper citizens of a revolutionary state were idealistic tasks that the cultural vanguard had to try to perform. Their tools would be the symbolic and ideological realms as well as the social activities engendered by culture. These would include activities sponsored and/or promoted by cultural institutions such as art, literary and film production, literary, artistic and filmic competitions, festivals, and outreach activities such as literary workshops, cine-clubs, and amateur cultural organizations. Though pragmatism was seen as a perfectly legitimate way of carrying on institutional activities, the theoretical conflicts that resulted in the disappearance of *Lunes* made evident the need to implement more specific cultural policies that could legitimate standards of artistic and revolutionary merit.

According to Law 169, cultural work should transform collective consciousness and deepen the revolutionary spirit. Since this did little to clarify the specific aesthetic principles that cultural workers could use either to carry out their cultural production or at least to defend it against ideological attacks, debates over aesthetics began with the

Revolution and increased after 1961. Since Marxist aesthetics dominated the debates, it is worth detailing what particular strands of Marxist aesthetics were popular among Cuban cultural workers and which theoretical premises characterized Cuban aesthetics during the 1960s and 1970s. Though I am not claiming that all cultural workers read, learned, or used these aesthetic principles to determine aesthetic value, many of these principles reached most cultural workers, albeit in a "popular" (versus academic) form.

A quick survey of aesthetic publications in Cuban journals and magazines reveals a rich discursive space, far from monolithic and quite aware of several key strands of Continental and Latin American aesthetic philosophies. Included are the Marxism of the Frankfurt School, French-influenced structuralist aesthetics, Soviet-style aesthetics, and Latin American aesthetics, to mention a few. In this section I briefly discuss some ideas by Bertolt Brecht, Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, and Aguirre as a way of reviewing commonly found ideas, theoretical positions, and definitions. I comment on Brecht because he became one of the more recognized names in Marxist aesthetics in Cuban intellectual circles during the 1960s. His ideas inspired not only theater, but also film and television. Though never widely published in Cuba, some of his work and ideas were commonly referenced in the journals *Casa* and *Cine Cubano*. Of particular interest to Cuban cultural workers were Brecht's concept of distanciation and his ideas regarding the relationship of audiences to theater.[54]

Distanciation is a staging and acting technique that attempts to break the alienating illusionism of classical theater. Brecht conceived it as a way of foregrounding

the sociality and historicity of an actor's gestures and theater's production techniques. While acting, actors should be able to support a duality composed of, on the one hand, the character she/he is representing and, on the other hand, the actor's critique of such character. Identification with the character should only be used to highlight the character's social and historical contradictions. In so doing, the distanciation technique could engender a critical representation of reality, via drama, by making reality knowable and transformable.[55]

The technique of distanciation was useful to Cuban cultural workers, for it emphasized the audience's critical engagement with reality and conceived of the audience as a participant in the solution of social problems.[56] Given that the leadership saw political participation as a way of gaining the support of the Cuban people, an aesthetics that produced cultural works that invited participation was politically coherent with public policy.[57] In addition to support, the leadership believed that participation was key to the transformation of the Cuban people. De-alienation by praxis was a common axiom of political thought in the Cuba of the sixties. Extending the axiom to the field of culture meant conceiving of an active audience as an audience that could be transformed by praxis into a subject closer to the ideal of the new man.

While some Cuban cultural workers (Grupo Teatro Escambray, ICAIC) used Brecht's work to conceptualize the pragmatics of producing revolutionary narratives, an ongoing attempt to investigate the relationships of Marx and Lenin to culture required the examination of more abstract questions and issues. According to the Cuban art critic

Gerardo Mosquera, the work of the philosopher Sánchez partly fulfilled this purpose.[58] Sánchez was one of the most enduring influences in post-revolutionary Cuba as he was widely published during the 1960s and again during the late 1970s and 1980s. Mosquera comments that Sánchez deeply influenced the field with his writings, his ideological support of the Revolution, and his numerous visits to the island during the 1960s. Although his influence diminished during the dark first half of the 1970s, his work was welcomed again after the founding of the Ministry of Culture in 1976 (172).

In his work, Sánchez elaborated on Marx's aesthetics and arrived at several conclusions that Cuban intellectuals would repeat throughout the next couple of decades. The most important of these conclusions was the faith in the transformational power of art.[59] According to Sánchez, Marx's greatest contribution to aesthetics was conceiving of the aesthetic as a peculiar relationship between man and reality. This relationship has been constructed historically, socially, in the process of transforming nature and in the creation of a world of human objects (4). Aesthetics is, for Sánchez, a particular way of assimilating reality. In this assimilation, the particular of the object is not lost to general laws but remains as an immediate experience. Conversely, assimilating the world through a theoretical attitude means placing the subject in the sphere of existence of the object, resulting in the subject's alienation and self-abstraction. Theory, he argues, supposes the appropriation of the object by the subject through self-abstraction. Abstracting the self, and the self's relationship to the world, impedes self-knowledge and fosters alienation. In opposition, artistic assimilation via

the aesthetic experience allows for the display and generation of human potentials in relation to the self and the community. The object becomes the subject's mean of expression (6). Sánchez argued that the possibility of producing art exists only insofar as men and women have the capacity to concretize, through work, essential forces. Given that the senses have become humanized through labor in art production, the senses become means of self-knowledge. Artistic labor, hence, humanizes objects but also objectifies the self. Their link is social and productive, mutually generative. This aspect of their relationship is what allows for the free and creative attitude of man before object (13-17).

Such theorization of the transformational power of art relied on understanding art as labor and not abstraction and on understanding labor as the humanization of reality. Artistic production and the aesthetic experience are, in his theoretical frameworks, examples of de-alienated labor and self. Sánchez, like Brecht, understood the self to be transformable only in situations in which the self could be known or objectified. Self-knowledge was an a priori condition to self-transformation, particularly if self-transformation was conceived in relation to a telos, which in the Cuban case existed. If the telos was the new man, and if the individual was to participate in her/his own transformation, then she/he required a technique for self-knowledge. Since labor in general was alienated, the individual was left with the aesthetic experience as the only technique of self-knowledge.

Finally, I have chosen to comment on the work of Aguirre because in my brief reading of Cuban aesthetics, her work stands out as a successful attempt at theorizing an aesthetics that incorporates the cultural policies and the political requirements of her time. Like Brecht and Sánchez, Aguirre elaborates on the transformational, and revolutionary, power of art.[60] In her well-grounded contribution to Marxist aesthetics in 1963, she argues that revolutionary art has specific characteristics and that these work to create a powerful and critical link between audience and reality. In order to produce an argument that could account for the political requirements of 1963, which likely included, at least, an acknowledgement of the work done in the USSR, she argued for "socialist realism." While this term "socialist realism" appeared to refer to Soviet aesthetics, particularly aesthetics influenced by Georg Lukács, Aguirre uses the term in an unusual fashion and, indeed, refashions it to fit the Cuban cultural climate, which at the time was heavily influenced by Western aesthetics and art.[61] Her definition of socialist realism is an insightful definition that could be applied today to most political art and that recaptures some of the spirit of Lukács's work.

Aguirre contended, echoing Lukács, [62] that socialist realism is the best type of artwork if the goal of art is to transform individuals and society. She writes: "The world does not satisfy men and he, with art, can contribute to perfect it, deepen it, improve it, recreate it, if he ably reflects in his conscience the objective reality."[63] As in the work of Brecht and Lukács, art's meaningful contribution to life is its power to reflect on reality and make reality objective, knowledgeable, and, thus, transformable. However, for her,

realism in art is not a type of representation of reality, the position that Lukács and Brecht favored, though each favored opposing representational styles.[64] Instead, realism refers to the work's property of successfully conveying reality's more important characteristics. Aguirre's moderation in this regard wisely accommodates a wider array of representational styles and audience competences. In order to convey reality one must, Aguirre argued like Lukács, use artistic tropes. These do not hinder realism nor truthfulness since they are shortcuts that reveal the interconnectedness of objects, phenomena, and reality. They are habits, consensual, and communicative (111). These tropes suggest the possibility of boundless communication and also the limits of communication. Tropes are communal. Moreover, the contingency of tropes is actualized in the contingency of reception, profiling the historical location and ideological formation of their existence (112).

To Aguirre, revolutionary art is socialist realism, as defined by her. In order to produce socialist realist art, it is necessary to understand that the artistic activity is fundamentally a social and philosophic practice. In arguing this point, she is trying to break with the tendency to place revolutionary art and aesthetics as evolutions of art. Socialist realism cannot be explained in terms of art's evolution, since all art has been based on idealist aesthetics, and that which evolves from idealism will manifest it. Socialist realism is, however, based on materialism, which is the product of Marxist philosophy, and not art history. Therefore, the revolutionary artist's modus operandi should be Marxist philosophy and/or revolutionary practice.

Using Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, Aguirre argued for an idea of beauty not dependent on the ephemeral satisfaction of the senses, but on the ability of things to awaken the desire to appreciate reality affectively and without alienation. In her thought system, understanding reality is the goal of revolutionary (true) art, and beauty is just one of its vehicles. Rejecting prescription, she forwarded that since varied ways exist to arrive at understanding, art is not required or expected to be beautiful. Though her ideas are quite permissive, she recognizes that not all art is equally able to facilitate the audience's understanding of reality. Abstract art, for instance, is a poor vehicle of revolutionary ideas. Though it provides beautiful and insightful rendition of objects, the insights are and remain sensorial. For Aguirre, this type of art is hopelessly a-ideological and unlikely to foster understanding (116). Its only revolutionary usefulness can be its use in industrial design and for educating the masses about form.

She insists that while not all art or aesthetic principles can be revolutionary, no art or aesthetic principle should be censured. Even aesthetic idealism, though not particularly apt to carry on revolutionary goals, is Cuba's aesthetic legacy and is always, of necessity, the frame within which ideological debate about art happens (117). Echoing Castro in "Palabras," Aguirre insists that as long as socialism is not harmed by an aesthetic practice, and abstract art has this characteristic, these practices should not be censored or coerced. Indeed, styles such as impressionism, surrealism, and romanticism can have a revolutionary effect. The implicit critiques of perception,

rationality, and intellectualism, respectively, can be in accord with realism and socialism (119).

In sum, cultural and artistic production should embrace the principles of Marxist-Leninism. Since these are ideological activities, cultural production should be recognized as political. Aguirre, however, in defining these practices as ideological and in recognizing the lack of a formal model that the artist should follow, erases the possibility for artists and intellectuals of defining a telos within aesthetic practice. Art, at best, is a technique, a mode of elaboration that the cultural worker uses to shape her work and public self in accordance with the telos of the Revolutionary Man, the New Man, and the idealized vanguard. The goal of art is not beauty. It is revolution.

Contributions to the issue of revolutionary art from film theoreticians echoed the lines set by Brecht, Sánchez, and Aguirre. As commented before, Julio García Espinoza and Gutiérrez wrote two essays key to aesthetic issues in Cuban film.[65] García's essay, published in 1969, argued for a new poetics for film. Much in line with Brecht's dissatisfaction with classical theater, García reacted against the illusionism of Hollywood cinema; he proposed an imperfect cinema that would rely on a dialogic relationship with the viewer. Hollywood cinema, he contended, hides the means of its production and positions the viewer as a consumer who passively reconstitutes its alienation. In contrast, "imperfect cinema" attempts to break with this modality of reception by showing film as labor. The dialogue between text and viewer makes the viewer a participant in the production of meaning and uses the viewer's artistic labor to

concretize, echoing Sánchez, the viewer's essential force.[66] Imperfect cinema activates reception and has the potential to transform viewers because this activity is shaping reality and it is thus labor; imperfect cinema humanizes filmic language and the objects represented in the narrative, but it also objectifies the viewer's self. As in Sánchez's work, the link between film and viewer becomes social and productive, mutually generative.

Gutiérrez proposed a film aesthetics able, simultaneously, to prepare the individual ideologically and entertain him/her.[67] This dual task can be performed by the use of "show" and "spectacle" and by assuming a real "popular cinema." His definition of realism is close to Aguirre's. Like Aguirre, Gutiérrez argues that film must be able to communicate with the people, and thus it has to use existing tropes. Though the goal of film can only be reached by a new understanding of reality, this goal cannot be attained without recourse to the senses. Thus, entertainment and emotions (what Aguirre calls beauty) can be used as the vehicle of intellect and reason (120). Given these requirements, the realism of popular cinema cannot be the consequence of a straightforward reflection of reality; instead, popular cinema's realism must be able to produce a *new reality* resulting from the bridging of "genuine reality" and fiction (121-123).

Brecht, Sánchez, Aguirre, García, and Gutiérrez were trying, in different ways, to answer the same question: how to use art, film, and/or literature to change the audience. Their proposals have in common the idea that the best art, revolutionary art, should be

able to perform the following functions: first, it should transform the viewer/audience. But true transformation cannot result from coercive means or ideological manipulation; it should result from the viewer's actions. Therefore, revolutionary art must engage the viewer's self-knowledge. To do so, it had to communicate with the viewer (even avant garde lexicon implies communication). This means that it must use languages and representational styles familiar to the viewer (competence). Second, these familiar languages and representational styles have to be used in such a way that they could move the viewer, take the viewer out of his/her ideological inertia. These two functions could be achieved either by denaturalizing tropes, denaturalizing reality, or denaturalizing the self. Denaturalizing tropes involved showing the social and normative nature of languages and representational styles. Brecht, García, and, to a lesser extent, Gutiérrez believed in this tactic. Denaturalizing reality implied representing a piece of reality in a different way, a tactic also espoused by Aguirre and Gutiérrez. Denaturalizing the self required the participation of the viewer in order to make the object of art a product of the viewer's self. This is more clearly seen in Sánchez, though present in all. The three denaturalizing tactics are deeply interrelated since the three are intrinsic elements of experience, and a change of one will bring a change to all. However, the distinction is useful because it replicates the way cultural workers often divided their objects of reflection, discussed in the next section.

Discourse 5: Proper Objects of Aesthetic Reflection

Law 169 established that true revolutionary art should have the power to educate the people. As commented in the previous chapter, this idea created the need to investigate the potential art and culture had for transforming the citizenry into a revolutionary social base for government and institutions. To achieve this, art and culture had to be political (intentionally transformative), be the proper articulation between vanguard and society, embody a proper aesthetics, and reflect on issues and things understood to be educational. Broadly speaking, some of these issues related to the formal aspects of culture such as representational styles and others to the contents or personal and/or social realities explored though representation. Continuing the simile of education, debates on representational styles can be seen as debates on pedagogy while debates on content can be seen as debates on curriculum. Just as teachers and pedagogists were seeking for the best ways to use the formal educational system to produce revolutionary citizens, Castro and the central government requested that cultural workers should find the best ways to use the informal educational system (i.e. art and popular culture) to do the same.

One of the first problems that cultural workers encountered after the triumph of the Revolution was deciding the type of "language" that revolutionary art should use. Given that revolutionary art had to communicate something to someone, and to perform an educative and transformational role, it was reasonable to debate on the issue: Should the language of revolutionary art be a "popular language"? Could cultural workers use

the whole array of Western art, including abstractionism and other avant garde styles to accomplish the goals of the Revolution? The answers to these questions were and are complex, since they are embedded in debates regarding whether form should only be a vehicle for content or whether it should also be seen and used as content. Moreover, to choose either answer requires making decisions regarding the cultural competence of audiences and regarding the best way to use this competence to educate the audience. Clearly, some representational styles can potentially alienate audiences and impede an educational or formative experience while others may invest content with rich and complex meanings. To use a specific representational style is more than a reflection of the formal preferences of the cultural worker or the stylistic fashions of Western art. It is also an expression of the cultural worker's idea of who the audience is and of the best way to connect with them. Given that in Cuba individuals aware of these aesthetic and political nuances evaluated art and culture, the debate moved from which styles could be used in Cuba to which styles could be better vehicles for revolutionary content.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the *P.M.* debate had highlighted the fact that answers to questions regarding form and content could not be separated from the social and political struggles of cultural groups and institutions. Theoretical arguments were emblematic of the camps and quarrels among cultural workers: Castro versus *Lunes*, ICAIC versus *Hoy*, UNEAC versus *Lunes*, and so on. These arguments, however, were used to support or reject decisions and, once issued, remained as normative ways of understanding culture and art, even if one of the factious groups had disappeared. That

was the case with the set of ideas that Castro used in "Palabras," which continue impacting today's Cuba even though Castro's words eliminated the relevance of the group *Lunes* within weeks of being pronounced.

Early in the Revolution, experimentation was common. It was also common advocating in its behalf. As mentioned before, the editorial team of *Lunes* promoted modern art and formal experimentation, but they were not the only ones. Publications like *Casa de las Américas* also supported experimentation. In fact, early in 1960, Oscar Hurtado, addressing criticism against abstract art, argued in *Casa* in behalf of abstract art. He contended that more and more people accepted abstract art and that rather than assuming it was apolitical, critics should consider the high number of political enemies abstractionism gained because of the way it dealt with reality.[68] Hurtado, and those working in *Lunes*, championed formal experimentation and modernist art partly because they conceived of Cuban audiences as having multiple competences and tastes. Accordingly, art that could educate a segment of the population, even if small, should be considered politically responsible. In thinking in this way, they were the minority.

"Palabras" thwarted the early embracing of experimental languages since the speech emphasized communication with the masses and the use of the masses' language as the best way of complying with the requirements of the government. The First Congress of Writers and Artists (UNEAC's send-off event) took place shortly after Castro's speech. Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, former President of Cuba, inaugurated the Congress with a speech that focused on the idea that art and literature should

communicate with the people. Echoing Castro's concerns with content and Guevara's concerns with the taste of the masses, Dorticós proposed the use of folklore as a way of addressing the people's ideology and a way of controlling content. Intellectual hermetism, he argued, did not benefit the people, and, in an unusual move that betrayed the marginal position of *Lunes* (soon to disappear), he added that abstract art must be eliminated.[69] But Dorticós was only addressing some of the issues.

During the same Congress, Guillén had called for a qualified self-negation. Though a socialist intellectual must negate herself/himself, she/he cannot start from zero. Her/his ideological foundations are bourgeois, as Lenin had recognized. Since bourgeois ideology and culture constituted the socialist intellectual's subjectivity, then no choice existed but to build socialism with some of capitalist culture and ideology.[70] But what things belonging to capitalist culture must be gathered? What Cuban work or idea can be considered a proper object of artistic reflection? In a line similar to Dorticós, Guillén proposed gathering national culture; however, given the long Spanish influence on Cuban culture, he suggested, this inheritance had to be collected, purified, and criticized. Another most important source of themes and creative possibilities was, Guillén proposed, the Revolution itself. Guillén understood that communicating with the people could turn to paternalism, something he emphatically rejected: "Paternalism is reactionary." Works that flag their politics, without regard for the more subtle ways in which the politics of everyday life is manifested, miss the point. The best political art is subtle and produces, not only represents, a political world (78).

Guillén's commentaries on the topic proved to be quite close to what was going to happen in the future, particularly in the literary, theatrical, and filmic worlds. Cuban cultural workers, for the most part, became concerned with a revision of Cuba's past (e.g., use of historical themes) and tried to produce a new political world by questioning the workings of the Revolution in the social and personal landscapes.

In literature, most novels during the first half of the 1960s had a pre-revolutionary setting and an existentialist tone that included either an existentialist hero or an existentialist critique of pre-revolutionary life.[71] The few novels of the period set after the Revolution (*Maestra Voluntaria*, 1962, by Daura Olema García, and *El Farol*, 1964, by Loló Soldevilla) attempted to examine and reflect the extraordinary mood, though in a propagandistic way (25). The second half of the 1960s saw a formally experimental period that included works such as Alejo Carpentier's *El Año 59* (1965), Lezama Lima's *Paradiso* (1966), and Severo Sarduy's *De Donde son los Cantantes* (1967). These three significantly different works shared a concern for the Cuban nation, *Cubanidad*, language, and the subjective relationship of individuals to history (39-60). During the 1970s, the novelistic became more ideological and included both historical topics (*Las Cercas Caminaban*, 1970, by Alcides Iznaga, deals with nineteenth-century plantation life) and revolutionary themes (*Sacchario*, 1970, by Miguel Cossío Woodward, dealt with the creation of the Revolutionary Man).

In theater, the new cultural climate fueled the organization of theater groups concerned with examining the Revolution and its advances, as well as the challenge of

generating revolutionary values in a population still displaying pre-revolutionary attitudes. As commented before, Grupo Teatro Escambray put together plays that tackled local problems and challenges and that relied on audience participation and feedback.[72] To do so, they employed vernacular ways of communicating (decimas), oral traditions, and peasant folklore. The La Yaya theater group followed the same tactics and set out plays dealing with quotidian problems (*!Ay, Señora mi Vecina, se me Murió mi Gallina* deals with sanitation), social problems (*Este Sinsonte tiene Dueño* is about the incorporation of women into the workforce), and pre-revolutionary attitudes (*Secreto de la Mano* explores witchcraft) (81). Other objects of reflection were the family (*Adriana en Dos Tiempos*, by Freddy Artiles, and *Si Llueve te Mojas*, by Héctor Quintero), worker's lives (*Llévame a la Pelota*, by Ignacio Gutiérrez, and *Amante y Penol*, by Herminia Sánchez, directed by Manolo Terraza), and historical battles against imperialism (*Girón—Historia Verdadera de la Brigada 2506*, by Raúl Macías).[73]

In theater and literature, proper objects of reflection became common objects of reflection and constituted a finite set of themes and representational styles. Objects of reflection, in so far as they become a "thematics," are evidence of normative ways of representing reality and of hegemonic cultural production values. In addition, thematics help constitute the viewer's horizon of expectation that trigger discrete modes of reception and hermeneutic techniques. As in literature and theater, Cuban films can be organized in terms of themes. Two were often present and require closer examination: historical themes, often centered on revolutionary struggles, and examination of the

workings of the Revolution, often dealing with contemporary social challenges and/or individual responses to revolutionary needs.

For the Cuban leadership and the cultural vanguard, one of the key areas colonized by Spanish and, later, American rule was the representation of history.[74] Through academic, political, and artistic arguments, Cubans contended that Cuban history was, up to 1959, a distorted narrative that supported, legitimized, or naturalized Cuba's oppression. Revising this history was therefore a fundamental goal of the revolutionary academy and the field of cultural production.[75] The reasons were not purely historiographic, but also political. The leadership commonly argued that historicizing Cuba's struggles, for instance, would inspire the citizenry into revolutionary action. Commander Rigoberto García commented in 1980 on the inspiration his soldiers drew from learning the history of the struggles of the Cuban people.[76] According to him, history fueled heroic deeds and insulated them from the imperialist propaganda: "Whoever studies the true history of Cuba in depth will never be able to cross the "bridges" that imperialism builds."[77]

Given their strategic importance in the ideological field, most approaches to history benefited the new government by representing revolutionary struggles in a benign light and by validating the government's agenda.[78] History, for instance, explained the Revolution as the natural result of Cuba's past. History also represented the past as a site of revolutionary struggle that the new Cuba would have to emulate (3). The first revolutionary generation learned the values of sacrifice, selflessness reading,

and observing history. The following generation learned these values by reference to historical accounts of the first generation, their sacrifices and struggles (4). The importance of history has been so great that its study has been carried out within and outside the academy. For instance, the Department of Historic Assessment of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (Departamento de Asesoramiento Histórico del Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión) assists writers and directors on the production of programming about history. Some of the large cane mills, the Revolutionary Armed Forces, the PCC, and most of the cities and municipalities maintain resident historians (6-7). It is amidst this emphasis on history that cultural workers from the fields of literature, theater, and film (and also workers from radio, television, and periodicals) commonly produced narratives that explored historic events.[79]

Films dealing with historical themes often represented historical events involving revolutionary or armed struggles. Examples of this include: *Lucia,* to be discussed in Chapter 5. *The First Machete Charge* (*La Primera Carga del Machete,* 1969, d. Manuel Octavio Gómez) dealt with the War of Liberation against Spain in 1868. *The Other Francisco* (*El Otro Francisco,* 1975, d. Sergio Giral) and *The Last Supper* (*La Ultima Cena,* 1976, d. Gutiérrez) explored life in sugar plantations and colonial slavery. Innovative treatment of historical themes was common. In *A Cuban Struggle Against the Demons* (*Una Pelea Cubana Contra los Demonios,* 1971, d. Gutiérrez), the camera is in continuous circular motion (150). *Girón* (1972, d. Manuel Herrera) is a historical reconstruction through interviews of participants in the Bay of Pigs invasion that uses

an impressive array of representational techniques: direct narration, interviews, recreation, voice-over, and archival footage. *The Days of Water* (*Los Dias del Agua,* 1971, d. Gómez), which explores religious hysteria in the 1930s, uses a highly expressionistic palette and dreamlike narrative often photographed with a hand-held camera.

If the past was a topic of historic and creative exploration, according to the needs of the leadership, the present was examined against the backdrop of the Revolution. As in the novel, feature films which centered on post-revolutionary themes took years to appear.[80] When they did, they showed a tendency to explore the ways social changes affected individuals and the way individuals responded, or failed to respond, to revolutionary ideals. Addressing the former are films dealing with the difficulties of housing (*House for Swap - Se Permuta,* 1984, d. Juan Carlos Tabío), bureaucracy (*Death of a Bureaucrat - Muerte de un Burocrata,* 1966, d. Gutiérrez) governmental administration (*Now It's Up to You - Ustedes Tienen la Palabra,* 1974, d. Manuel Octavio Gómez), and urban renewal (*A Man, A Woman, A City - Una Mujer, Un Hombre, Una Ciudad,* 1977, d. Manuel Octavio Gómez).[81] The latter category includes all the films that will be discussed in the next chapter. As a group, these films reflect on the way revolutionary values (such as gender equality and the socialized of property) challenged individuals whose sense of self depended on non- or pre-revolutionary ideologies (like sexism and private property).

Analyzing the most relevant objects of aesthetic reflection shows the ongoing importance of using culture to further the goals of government. The otherwise vague comments made by Castro in "Palabras" regarding the issues that should concern cultural workers (i.e., "serving the people" and producing culture that is one with the Revolution) were often articulated through an array of representational tactics (Brechtian tactics, expressionism, neorealism, and other types of realisms) and thematics. The latter included depictions of history, the Revolution, and the challenges to revolutionary life. While it would be untrue to state that all Cuban culture used these themes, their commonality suggests a field of cultural production where material and ideological rewards were given to workers willing to put these important political issues at the center of their aesthetic explorations. The resulting cultural works provided the populace with an agenda of public discussion and set ways for interpreting the past (history), the present (the Revolution), and the best way to arrive to a socialist society and to become the new man (challenges to revolutionary life).

Discourse 6: The (Ideal) Relationship of the People to Culture

Each of the previous discourses rests on assumptions about the Cuban people, the Cuban audience, and Cuban subjectivity and these must be explored. What type of citizenry accepts the leadership's attempts at transforming them? What type of subject do the governmental tactics require for their success? What kind of audiences, publics, readers, viewers would respond to the changing field of culture in a positive, productive

way? What about defeats on all of these fronts? What subjects would resist, negate, or ignore the transformational apparatus of government and culture? Although all of these questions are fascinating, my project requires exploring the ideas about viewers that more likely influenced cultural workers (such as filmmakers and cultural critics) during the first twenty-five years of the Revolution since these are more likely to have influenced the production and reception of the films in turn.

First, it is necessary to point out that the field of culture likely relied on a diverse set of ideas about the people, some of which were possibly contradictory (for instance, in Chapter 3 I mentioned different ideas about "freedom"). That said, official language about the people tended to be unidirectional and top-down, as is suggested by Fagen and Medin. This meant that, given the need of institutions for governmental support, public spaces (such as publications, speeches, and policies) worked as filters of ideas and that only those ideas that resonated with the PCC's ideological dictums were likely to be uttered. Therefore, in what I refer to as the discourse pertaining to the relationship of people to culture, it is possible to draw a discursive field based on some top-down, fundamental ideas.

According to Louis Althusser "the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology . . . *insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects.*"[82] In the Cuban case, the "subject" that constituted the ideology of the Revolution was not the Cuban people. If (generously) we are to call the nebulous set of ideas, symbols, and emotions shared by the incoming new guard "an

ideology," it is necessary to point out that the subjects this ideology constituted (or reconstituted) were the guerrilla and the political and cultural vanguards. Cubans that did not belong to these communities could not respond to a revolutionary ideology. This was something that the member of guerrilla units learned during their contact with the peasants in the Sierra Maestra.[83] Originally, Castro and the rest had believed that the peasants would quickly and fully join the upraising. That was not the case. In Sierra Maestra, and because of the reluctance of peasants to join the revolt, the leading cadre learned that crafting a revolutionary consciousness would have to be a gradual process (6). Cubans were concrete individuals formed as subjects not by the Revolution or historical materialism or guerrilla warfare but by pre-revolutionary ideologies. Cubans, by and large, were ready to respond to interpellations coming not from the government's ideology but from the ousted hegemony's ideologies. In this sense, the people, the masses, as Cuban vanguards call them, were not subjects to a radical revolutionary ideology. This is evident when one reads allusions to the people in Castro's early speeches. In these, he talked to the people with the language of populism, a well established style in Cuba, transformed into a fully participatory oratory style. In his speeches, Castro typically placed himself as the voice of the people, as one with the people, and used these forums to listen to the people and converse with them. He would interrupt his own speeches to address questions or commentaries coming from the audience.[84] Castro's ability to use public forums to connect with the people has been

credited for his early success because it established strong emotional links with the people.[85]

To constitute a revolutionary ideology that would form, in turn, a revolutionary citizen, and a revolutionary subject, the Cuban leaders needed to undo a historical trajectory, a way of being national, a way of being an individual. Indeed, Castro recognized that the greatest obstacle of the Revolution was "the force of custom, of the way and habits of thinking and looking at things that prevailed in the vast section of the population." These prejudices and ideas, supported by the dominant classes before the Revolution, "constituted one of the most powerful forces with which the revolution had to contend."[86] The prejudices included *amiguismo* (nepotism), gangsterism, *chapucería* (shoddiness), *el choteo* (a specific Cuban type of humor that trivializes serious subjects), and *blandenguería* (wimpiness).[87] To create a bridge between the ideologies of the Cuban people, the leadership used, as mentioned before, already established discourses and *some* pre-revolutionary cultural values such as virility, justice, and sacrifice. These were activated towards the goal of forming a revolutionary consciousness.[88]

Some of the characteristics of "category of the subject" can be discerned from the previous discussion, including the sections on "Culture as Transformation" and the cultural vanguard. First, the category of the subject included at least two types of subjects. The first was the vanguard, which was in charge of taking leadership roles and has been discussed above. The second type of subject was the Cuban people, which

were to be led. Moreover, the Cuban people were not revolutionaries, but they were transformable, partly by culture.

In Cuba, this transformation was often discussed in ways similar to technologies of self. According to Foucault, technologies of the self "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality."[89] By way of technologies of the self, individuals address issues of personal identity, community, personal freedom, and historicity. They do so by embracing culturally specific ways of ethically taking care of themselves. Each of the previous functions and roles relies, as it was the case in Cuba, in discourses that ask individuals to reflect on themselves, and that define such reflection and the actions ensued by it as acts of freedom.

An influential discursive contribution that framed the debate of the transformation of Cuban people in terms of technologies of self is found in Guevara's discussions on the New Man. In this and other documents, Guevara produced some of the most important ideas about the category of the subject. His ideas rested on the Marxist notion that, due to the fact of their alienation, the masses are "inhuman" and depended on the transformation of their material conditions of existence to become fully human. He argues this point as follows: "I think that the simplest thing to do is recognize its [the capitalist individual's] quality of not-done, of un-finished product."[90] To overcome this,

society must use direct and indirect education, but the individual must engage "in a conscious process of autoeducation" (9). Guevara is defining the Cuban people as incomplete and as in need of full self-formation. Transformation is required to fit the new society and to abandon, ideologically, the pre-revolutionary Cuba. For Guevara, the transformation of the individual has to happen at the level of "*conciencia"* (consciousness or subjectivity). *Conciencia* is the raw material on which society, state, and self must work. Borrowing Foucault's terminology, for Guevara *conciencia* is the material on which technologies of transformation must center.[91]

In what way should *conciencia* change according to Guevara? *Conciencia* must change at the moral level and include the transformation of values.[92] This is done with direct education, whereby the state inculcates new habits, and indirect education, whereby social experiences (such as film-viewing) teach the individual the necessity to enter the new and just society (12). Guevara is aware that the ideological separation between vanguard and masses signals the underdevelopment of society's subjectivity. In his model, the vanguards embody the characteristics of the New Man and become the goal or telos of the masses transformational trajectory (14).

Conciencia is the material that will be "worked" to achieve the telos of the New Man. Following Guevara, this work is performed with techniques borrowed from Marxism that involve labor and culture. The use of labor as a technique of de-alienation is a Marxist idea that works on the assumption that alienation is the product of the capitalist system as expressed by the relationship of worker, profit, and final product.

Guevara, like other Marxists, believed that alienation could be overcome by breaking this system.[93] To do so, he proposed the institution of moral, instead material, incentives, an economic strategy popular in Cuba during the 1960s (129-130). In this way, he reasoned, the worker would stop seeing her/his own work as commodity, and, in its stead, she/he would begin seeing it as an expression of social duties (131).

A second technique involved the use of culture and art to shape the Cuban's subjectivity into the *conciencia* of the New Man (132). Like labor, art-practice was theorized as a de-alienating technique. Alienation in this case meant the ideological separation of individual from itself and of individual from the world. Here, Guevara's Marxism echoes Sánchez's. As commented before, self-abstraction, a by-product of the Enlightenment and of Capitalism, made impossible real knowledge and real experience and forced a theoretical appropriation of reality and self. Art and culture, as expressive venues of the experiences of the people and of their freedom, could work to break the separation of individual and reality. Echoing Sánchez, Guevara sees art as a technique that individuals can use to appropriate the world in its particularity. Reacting against theory and the tendency of theory of abstracting object and self, Guevara and Sánchez propose art-practice as an epistemological tool that allows the opportunity to acquire self-knowledge (132).

Since the benefits of culture depended on individual praxis (art-practice as self-expression), a different notion of viewership and audience was required. The viewer could not be thought of as passive observer of the world (film, theater, television). The

viewer had to be thought of as actively engaging the world, actively producing meaning, actively crafting social criticisms, actively expressing herself/himself *through* the world, and, thus, humanizing it. Moreover, this activity was a technique necessary for the individual transformation from a subject of capitalism towards the telos of the New Man.

These ideas about subjects and about the ideal relationship Cubans should have to culture and art strongly impacted the cultural field and, in particular, shaped the way filmmakers and critics conceived of a film audience. An active film viewer was a necessity for the Revolution because the viewer needed to take part on her/his own decolonization. Viewer activity was understood as a political action. Supporting this idea, Alfredo Guevara had stated in 1959, regarding the popular response to the showing of *Esta Tierra Nuestra* (the film received standing ovations), that "each showing of the film had the same significance as a plebiscite."[94] The axiomatic linking of active audience to politicalization went hand in hand with the discourse of politicized culture and Marxist aesthetics. In the emerging Cuban discourse of active viewership, viewer's reflection and critical assessment of film were not only political but were expressively revolutionary gestures. Santiago Alvarez, Cuba's leading documentarist, expressed this at the Havana Cultural Congress of 1968. He said that ICAIC's objectives were "The formation of a new film public – more critical, more complex, more informed, more demanding, more revolutionary."[95]

In order to engender the conditions for the existence of this type of critical viewership, cultural workers undertook several tactics. ICAIC and the Cuban government began efforts on media literacy. For instance, cine-mobiles (mobile screening units) were organized in 1962 to take film to the provinces and rural Cuba.[96] The goal was to use film as a modernizing force but also to educate the people on filmic language and set up the competence that Cuban film, Cuban documentary, and Cuban television required from their viewers. In this spirit, a question-and-answer session followed a typical screening, during which the personnel of the mobile unit would answer questions about the film. These questions included basic questions regarding the making of the film, editing, special effects, things that audiences elsewhere would take for granted. Film was so unfamiliar to some of these audiences that operators of the mobile units witnessed many people talking to the screens, engaging in conversation with the film's characters, and, in general, marveling at the fact that events depicted on the screen were make believe. The screenings were successful to the point that sometimes audiences from one town would walk miles to the next town, chair in hand, to watch the film again (15).

In addition to the mobile units, cultural workers put together a weekly television show, *24 x seg*, dedicated to media literacy. The goal of this show was to teach viewers the mechanisms of filmic narration and their ideological underpinnings.[97] It included clips from films followed by expert commentaries. The titles to their themes are telling of the decolonizing impetus of the show: "Cinema in the Battle of Ideas," "Film and

Colonialism," "Cinematographic Language and Ideology," and "Latin American Cinema, a Combat Weapon" (104).

Another tactic used to produce a revolutionary viewership involved the use of an aesthetics that could engender critical and active viewership. Brechtian techniques in theater (Escambray) and film were used to demystify dramatic and filmic languages. On film, documentaries and fictional films regularly tried to show the viewer the cinematic grammar. The film philosophies of filmmakers like García and Gutiérrez, discussed in previous section, relied on the activities of viewers to furnish a revolutionary cinema.[98] For them, it was not enough to critically portray reality. The filmmaker also needed to portray critically herself/himself, her/his language, and the constructedness of film. In their theoretical and filmic contributions, these directors showed how film communicated because of ideology. Moreover, theirs could not be revolutionary film if viewers did not respond to their films' aesthetic reflexivity. So, in addition to having to justify their own productions in terms of box office, these directors needed to justify them by commenting on how their films affected viewers.[99]

Unlike in Europe and the United States, where active viewership has been discussed mostly in terms of counterhegemony, the Cuban discussions on the topic, as far as I know, elaborate on active viewership in terms of the hegemonic goals of the Cuban cultural and political leaderships. While in Europe and the United States, an active viewership may be a sign of resistance and political opposition, in Cuba, active viewership ideally resists American and European cultural imperialism, but not the

Cuban hegemony. This is an area underdeveloped in cultural research in Cuba, no doubt as the result of explicit and implicit governmental pressures.

Discourse 7: The Policing of Culture

In 1959 the cultural leaders of Cuba together with the political leadership passed Law 169, only months into the revolutionary period. This was a strong signal that Cuban culture was going to be regulated by policy and that policy was going to be enacted by governmental institutions. Since then, the production and exercise of a national cultural policy has given shape to the field of culture. Policy has defined what is permitted, forbidden, and how culture ought to be administrated, promoted, and controlled. This strong push toward normativity and the more or less strict application of policy reduced the types of culture that could exist in Cuba at any given time, but it also gave great vitality to a field that before 1959 was anemic, elitist, and, with some notable exceptions, marginal in the international cultural landscape.

Cultural policy was a type of formalized discourse that attempted to set guidelines regarding which types of culture could exist in revolutionary Cuba (i.e., "within the Revolution anything…") within the confines of the revolutionary government's political necessities. For instance, in 1959, Law 169 expressed this need through the organization of the film institute to propagate the message of the Revolution. In 1961, "Palabras" expressed the need to protect the Revolution from internal attacks, something doubly important in light of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. And second, the government

needed to further the reach and power of cultural institutions, and it thus organized the First Congress of Writers and Artists (see Chapter 3). In 1971, and amidst a wave of international protests regarding the treatment of Padilla, the First National Congress of Education and Culture was organized to draw new policies and defend existing cultural policies. In each instance, organization, congresses, and mobilization followed political, social, or cultural instability.

It is important to remark that cultural policy in Cuba has been often written in language that is relatively vague. Complex terms like “negation,” “decolonization,” and “alienation” have been an integral part in speeches, writings, and declarations about culture. That these concepts and others lent themselves to different interpretations depending on philosophical traditions and rhetorical styles made most of cultural policy subject to interpretation. This has been one of my arguments throughout. What this implies in terms of cultural policing is that given the possibility of different interpretations to the same general legislature or policy, the official interpretation would be the one uttered by the speaker with the highest status and not necessarily the one with the soundest argument. This feature of Cuban cultural policy gave way to institutional communities highly sensitive to the speech of the leadership regarding the interpretation of policy. This feature also produced blatant contradictions in the way cultural policy was applied. One such example is when Alfredo Guevara first opposed the film *P.M.* and *Lunes*. His reasons included a repudiation of formal experimentation.

Yet, only weeks after, Guevara declared that ICAIC would spouse formal experimentation and use form to create an authentic Cuban film tradition.[100]

While policing culture through legislation deeply affected Cuban culture and its development, what perhaps had the farthest reaching consequences regarding the policing of culture was the constitution of the myriad of government-sponsored cultural organizations. From aficionado organizations, reading circles, dance contests, to art schools, revolutionary museums, and free education, the field of culture after the Revolution multiplied in size, reach, and formal plurality but always under the auspices of revolutionary ideology, revolutionary citizens, and revolutionary resources. Because of the way these cultural institutions and organizations were constituted, they attracted those who wanted to participate in their self-formation while artistically manipulating realities approved by revolutionary instructors. In formal education, most aspects of the curriculum were taught using examples that complimented the revolution. In art and folkloric education, the revolutionary government provided all of the means for the learning and practice of the beaux arts, crafts, and popular arts becoming the sponsor of the arts and for that reason alone, less likely to be attacked or criticized.

Conclusion

Investigating seven of the discourses about culture that official communities fostered shows a normative system of ideas invested in legitimizing a stylistics of being public. Each discourse was centered on principles that linked culture to governance and

that made culture a fundamental aspect of the social and political transformation that Cuba would have to undergo to fit the political ideas of the new leading cadres. Among these cadres, which included the cultural vanguard, it was understood that culture was political, that culture, at times, was politics, and that to be a cultural vanguard one had to embrace the political positions of the PCC and the official cultural community.

If culture was political, then it had to have a political role, and this was, in Cuba, to "arm the minds" of the people, to make the Cuban masses proper subjects of government, proper citizens, proper revolutionaries. Culture was political because it became an instrument of politics. It was used to fulfill one of the primary goals of the Revolution, to transform Cubans into revolutionaries, into the New Man. Since this transformation could not be the result of coercion, its fulfillment required tactics that could make Cubans into allies in the process of their own transformation. Because of their ideological power, culture and education could be used to produce dispositions to introject the principles of the Revolution. These dispositions to introject were the result of tactically deploying ideas with existing ideological import such as freedom, courage, independence, sovereignty, and linking them to the new ideological and social realities of Cuba. A whole system of values, as manifested in the discourses of "existence as confrontation," manicheism, and Cuban nationalism, incited dispositions in citizens that would made them participants in their own self-formation. Through culture and education, two distinct but related processes came together, governance and self-formation or, rather, governance through self-formation.

Though culture had a political goal given by the leadership, the means to achieve such a goal had been a matter of continuous debate since 1959. Simply put, even if one wanted to use culture to transform people into revolutionary citizens and this was perceived as a clear goal (which is at least questionable), one must still find the right type of cultural work, cultural institutions, and cultural workers to achieve such goal. A field of cultural production had to be structured, and though some of the structuring happened because of struggles for hegemony, its development depended in part on the production of knowledges that could legitimize the field's existence and performance.

A debate about the cultural vanguard and the relationship of the intellectual to the Revolution attempted to produce the knowledge base required to define the best cultural workers. These workers would have to be willing-to-sacrifice leaders, invested in their personal decolonization, and with a pragmatic and populist epistemological stance. Since part of their training as vanguard required either direct contact with the people, or to be one with the people, cultural organizations instituted plans to bring peasants and workers to join the community of cultural workers through outreach and education programs. These programs also served as sites where cultural producers would be in direct contact with audiences.

In addition to the right type of cultural workers, it was necessary to investigate which type of cultural work could produce the dispositions required by the Revolution. After considering some ideas by Brecht, Sánchez, Aguirre, García, and Gutiérrez, I suggested that the right type of cultural work would have to denaturalize tropes (as with

imperfect cinema or epic theater), denaturalize reality (new content or new ways of presenting content), and/or denaturalize the self (making the viewer reflect on meaning production). These aesthetic characteristics were present in the ideas informing official cultural production and cultural texts. Imperfect cinema and actual films showed a tendency to question the stylistic nature of film language and to establish reflective conditions of reception. Similarly, the new socialist theater capitalized on Brecht's ideas of estrangement and some troupes, like Teatro Escambray, relied on a dialectic reception style.

Beyond these modernist questionings of forms and their critical potential, cultural workers tried to present reality in unusual ways or present unusual aspects of reality to fit revolutionary goals. For instance, some forms of folklore and historical topics, such as Abakua religion and AfroCuban culture, though intrinsic to the historic evolution of Cuban society, had been displaced from public culture by the Spanish and, later, United States cultural influences. A push to constitute a public culture that would speak to the common Cuban fostered folkloric and historic nationalistic themes and reinscribed Abakua and AfroCuban culture within national culture. If these objects of reflection were seen as fundamental to constituting a new national identity, so were revolutionary themes. These themes multiplied in all areas of culture from the sixties onward in film, literature, and theater. The exploration of revolutionary themes evidenced the goal of producing a new type of citizen that Cubans often called the New Man. Therefore, most of the revolutionary topics used narratives where a revolutionary man or woman served

as exemplars and were pitted against other types of "imperfect" individuals (such as bourgeois, oppressive, or sexist characters).

The development of the New Man was a key cultural goal framed in terms of technologies of self. Though a theoretical creation that contradicted pragmatic Cuban attitudes, the New Man was the telos of the process of social transformation that Cubans were subjected to since the early 1960s. Championed by Che Guevara, this "individual" was an archetype of the communist citizen, a social and subjective goal that required the methodic self-work of, ideally, all Cubans. Like all work, this labor would try to transform an object into something else. The object of transformation was, according to Guevara, the ethical relationship of the individual to itself and to the world, what Cubans often named *conciencia*. The resulting subject/self would possess the leadership characteristics of the vanguard as well as its drive toward self-sacrifice for the well being of society. Instead of being driven by profit and self-interest, this New Man would be led by moral incentives and social rewards. The techniques used to facilitate this process of self-transformation were self-education, reflection, and self-knowledge inspired by the new society and by a new relationship to cultural works and, thus, national history, national folklore, the Revolution, and ideologies.

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[1] Maurice Halperin, "Culture and the Revolution," in *The New Cuba: Paradoxes and Potentials*, ed. Ronald Radosh (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1976), 196.

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Production of Belief," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 101.

[3] It is worth briefly noting the difference between Cuba's vanguard political party and what I call the cultural vanguard. The political vanguard is an actual institution, the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), which, formed in 1965, became the most important institution of the nation. The PCC is structured in a way similar to other communist parties in socialist nations. It has a Secretariat, Politburo, and Central Committee and is organized according to geographical divisions; Max Azicri, *Cuba: Politics, Economics and Society* (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1988), 75. Its status as the leading party is guaranteed in Article 5 of the Cuban constitution. Though the PCC is not a branch of government, its role is to direct administrative and legislative branches such as the Organs of People's Power (OPP). According to Raul Castro, the PCC's second chair, while state organs may govern by administering, the PCC's method of government is persuasion, and it is at the level of ideology that the PCC oversees governmental activities; Raul Castro in Azicri, *Cuba*, 75). The majority of the members of government at all levels are members of the PCC, and PCC members dominate the leadership ranks of all institutions including ICAIC, UNEAC and the Ministry of Culture. Since membership in the PCC requires the explicit acceptance of "its programmatic

platform and statues" (76), most institutions are indirectly led by the persuasive goals and ideological precepts of the PCC. This has guaranteed a relative harmony between institutions and the ongoing legitimization of Cuba's political, economic, and governmental structures. However, the PCC's monopoly in persuasive, discursive, and institutional structures has never translated into a homogeneous ideology. Though certain ideas and practices have been hegemonic over time, such as following Marxist-Leninist precepts, spaces where debate and struggle, at varying degrees and depending on contingent possibilities, have come to be expected. Some of these spaces can be found at the local and municipal levels of government where public forums, discussions, congresses, mass mobilization, and the people's courts depend on a participatory democratic style and ongoing dialogue to function; Carollee Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba: Between Vision and Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Other such spaces existed around cultural institutions where, at different times and due to different reasons, it was necessary to resolve theoretical and practical issues, such as the definition of communist art, the role of the intellectual in revolutionary Cuba, the pervading though ambiguous issues surrounding intellectual and creative freedom, the granting of prizes, publishing, permits, and the production of films and plays. Underlying these debates were issues of normativity, morality, and deviance that made of culture, art, and film agonistic spaces where aesthetics was

discussed in terms of governance and politics. This is not to suggest that Cuban cultural institutions are independent from the government—in fact, Castro's tendency to micro-govern has been felt throughout the decades in cultural and other institutions. Rather, I suggest that these institutions operated under very general governmental guidelines and, thus, were required to elaborate and provide answers to unusually broad theoretical questions.

[4] Casa de las Américas is both an institution (Casa) and a publication (*Casa*)

[5] Lunes de Revolución is both an institution (Lunes) and a publication (*Lunes*).

[6] Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Mea Cuba* (New York: Plaza & Janes Editors, 1994), 67.

[7] To read about the way criticism was used for political purposes, see Georgina Dopico Black, "The Limits of Expression: Intellectual Freedom in Postrevolutionary Cuba," *Cuban Studies* 19 (1989): 107-42. See also Roger Reed, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba* (Geneva, Switzerland: Latin American Round Table, 1991).

[8] Dopico comments on the degree of influence and importance that literature gained during the revolutionary offensive of the late 1960s. Dopico, "The Limits of Expression," 115. The novel, in particular, became more propagandistic and new

genres that fitted the government's goals began to be sponsored by UNEAC. At the same time, censorship of works that did not support the revolutionary offensive was common, including the work of Padilla (116-118).

[9] See Chapter 3.

[10] Dopico, "The Limits of Expression," 107-42. See also Reed's stark investigation on revolutionary culture and censorship, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba*.

[11] Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 5.

[12] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87.

[13] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letter English and German Facing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For commentaries on the field of culture as the social organization of taste, objects, and institutions, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A*

Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988); Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 29-73; Pierre Bourdieu, "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (1987): 201-10.

[14] Toby Miller, *The Well Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 12.

[15] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1989 [1960]), 9.

[16] Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 41.

[17] "The *habitus* is necessity internalized and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions; it is a general transposable disposition which carries out a systematic, universal application--beyond the limits of what has been directly learnt--of the necessity inherent in the learning conditions" (170).

[18] In trying to produce a new type of citizen, the Cuban leadership continued the Soviet (the "new Soviet man" or Chelovyek, the incorporative masculine) and the Chinese Maoist tradition.

[19] Looking at the Cuban history of the last forty years is like looking at a catalog of scholastic approaches to the study of politics in society. Most approaches concentrate on the way economic and political reforms transformed revolutionary Cuba; I am, however, interested in approaches to research that investigate the role of culture in the lives of the Cuban people and the number of those studies is quite small. Two stand out because they have a relatively larger scope and because the cultural approach. Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); Tzvi Medin, *Cuba: The Shape of Revolutionary Consciousness* (Boulder, Colorado: L. Rienner Publishers, 1990).

[20] On July 6, 1961, Fidel Castro was interviewed in radio and television regarding a new embargo on lard by the United States. In a typical tactic by Castro, the embargo was used as an opportunity to further the constitution of the new society. In a jocular fashion, he declared that the imperialist's embargo would help Cubans loose weight, and this was a good thing. He declared: "This is the way in which we are going to resolve the fat problem. There is no doubt that with this and the plans of the INDER [Instituto Nacional de Deportes, Educación Física, y Recreación -- National Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation], and all of these sports matters, many people will be 'put on the line' (laughter)." Throughout the speech he continued emphasizing physical education and sports as

characteristics of a good citizen. Fidel Castro, "Castro Radio and TV Interview," *Revolución* [Havana], July 6, 1961.

[21] Medin, *Cuba*, 8.

[22] Peter T. Johnson, "The Nuanced Lives of the Intelligentsia," in *Conflict and Change in Cuba*, ed. Enrique A. Baloyra and James A. Morris (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 142.

[23] Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 107-108.

[24] The "gusano" is a traitor who migrated to Miami in 1959.

[25] Medin, *Cuba*, 13.

[26] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-7.

[27] Medin, *Cuba*, 54.

[28] Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba*, 95.

[29] Irving Louis Horowitz, "Cuban Communism," in *Cuban Communism*, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (United States: Trans-action, 1970), 8-12.

[30] The authors were: Raúl Molina, Manuel Pérez, Ramón Piqué, Oscar Valdés, Humberto Solás, Miguel Torres, Alberto Roldán, Iberé Cavalcanti, Fidelis

Sarno, Antonio Henríquez, Pastor Vega, José de la Colina, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Sarah Gómez, Octavio Cortázar, Mario Trejo, José Massip, Julio García Espinosa, Roberto Fandiño, Idelfonso Ramos, Jorge Fraga, Amaro Gómez, Fernando Villaverde, Octavio Basilio, Pedro Jorge Ortega, Manuel Gómez, Fausto Canel, Nicolás M. Guillén, and Fermín Borges. "Sobre un Debate entre Cineastas Cubanos," *Cine Cubano* 3, no. 14-15 (n.d.): 14-17.

[31] Medin, *Cuba*, 34.

[32] Given the characteristics of Cuba, where the state organized most, if not all, economic and cultural activities, most cultural mediators were involved in official cultural institutions. Therefore, in Cuba, the field of cultural production had a dual role. At the ideological level, the field produced the meaning and value of artistic works, including film, and granted as natural and logical certain interpretations. The field normalized part of the phenomenological world of Cuban citizens. At the institutional level, the field of cultural production coincided with official cultural institutions producing a stronger link between the cultural vanguard, cultural policy, and the Cuban people. In explaining how a narrow, though popular, definition of culture (the artistic output of a person or group valued in terms of aesthetic criteria, which is the way in which culture has been defined in the Cuban context) can be regulated through policy, Miller draws the following relationships between culture and policy: "Through the activation of policies,

organizations educate, circulate, sponsor, circumscribe, and exclude actors and activities defined by the titles artist or artwork"; Miller, *The Well Tempered Self,* 15. Moreover, cultural policy targets the general population with the idea of forming an ideal citizen. Given the centralization of culture in Cuba, it is possible to say that cultural policy targets citizens to develop *conciencia* and regulates the field of cultural production and the activities of those who are part of it.

[33] It is not a coincidence that after "Palabras" the First Congress of UNEAC served as the forum to discuss the policy and theory implications of the speech and the events that had just occurred. Similarly, after the Padilla affair, the First Congress of Education and Culture became a forum to discuss implications and events.

[34] Examples: China's Maoist Revolution; U.S.S.R.: Lenin

[35] Speech by Fidel Castro delivered November 30, 1971.

[36] Ernesto [Che] Guevara, "El Socialismo y el Hombre en Cuba," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1960]), 130.

[37] Nicolás Guillén, "Informe al Congreso," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1961]), 73. UNEAC's

inauguration was the First Congress of Writers and Artists, and during this event several key participations continued delineating the four areas of cultural debate and policy. During the Congress, Guillén, the president of UNEAC, gave a speech in which he elaborated extensively on the definition of the revolutionary intellectual.

[38] Ambrosio Fornet, "El Intelectual en la Revolución," in *Literatura y Arte Nuevo en Cuba* (Barcelona: Editorial Estela, 1971), 33-39.

[39] Catherine Davies, "Modernity, Masculinity and Imperfect Cinema in Cuba," *Screen* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 345-59.

[40] For more on the affective side of the Revolution, see Damián J. Fernández, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion* (Austin: University of Texas Press).

[41] Guillén, "Informe al Congreso," 78.

[42] Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, "Apertura del Primer Congreso de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1961]), 43-49.

[43] Andres R. Hernandez, "Filmmaking and Politics: The Cuban Experience," in *Conflict and Control in the Cinema*, ed. John Tulloch (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977), 468-80. Third Cinema refers to film initiatives (including aesthetic,

institutional, and political proposals) from Third World nations that were inspired by the likes of Franz Fanon and that began to appear at the end 1960s. The Argentinean Fernando Solanas and the Spanish Octavio Getino coined the term in 1969 in an essay that arouse intellectual debate accross the Americas. Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 1. Theories, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, edited by Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 33-58. Cuban filmmakers and film theorists (most importantly Julio García Espinosa with his writing "For an Imperfect Cinema") participated in the debate. See Julio García Espinosa, "For an Imperfect Cinema," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 1. Theories, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 71-82. Most Third Cinema theorists consider Cuban film to belong to this category of film-works, aesthetics, and institutional traditions. Paul Willemen, "The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections," in *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1991), 1-29. For this reason, some critics view Cuban film as Third Cinema, and, accordingly, as a decolonizing medium that challenges the hegemony of First Cinema (Hollywood) and Second Cinema (European art film).

[44] *El Megano* (1956) is an exception. Produced three years before the Revolution, the film dealt with the lives and tribulations of coal workers. See Chapter 3.

[45] Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image: Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 111-118.

[46] Aldo Menéndez González, "Las Artes Plásticas en la Cuba Revolucionaria," *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 44 (April 1976): 82.

[47] For personal accounts by students and teachers of the National School of Art Instructors, see Mirta de Armas, "Somos Instructores de Arte," *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 67 (March 1978): 57-59.

[48] See "Dirigentes de Organismos Hablan Sobre el Movimiento de Aficionados," *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 1 (March 1972): 24-32; "Informe Central al I Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba," in *La Lucha Ideológica y la Cultura Artístia Literaria*, ed. Nora Madan (La Habana: Editora Política, 1982), 59-65.

[49] "Dirigentes de Organismos Hablan Sobre el Movimiento de Aficionados," 27.

[50] Rosa Ileana Boudet, "Socialización del Teatro," *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 33 (May 1975): 72-83.

[51] Paul Baran, "El Compromiso del Intelectual," *Casa de las Américas* 2, no. 7 (July-August 1961): 14-21.

[52] Francisco López Cámara, "Ideología y Filosofía," *Casa de las Américas* 3, no. 19 (July-August 1963): 29-32.

[53] Mirta Aguirre, "Apuntes Sobre la Literatura y el Arte," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1980]), 108-21.

[54] "Del Estilo Épico de Bertolt Brecht," *Cine Cubano* 4, no. 21 (n.d.): 38-42; Cecilia Laverde, "Anotaciones Sobre Brecht en Cuba," *Casa de las Américas* 2, no. 15-16 (November 1962- February 1963): 77-90; Magaly Muguercia, "Un Teatro Popular Masivo y Partidario," *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 32 (April 1975): 73; Boudet, "Socialización del Teatro," 73-75.

[55] Laverde, " Anotaciones Sobre Brecht en Cuba," 80-81.

[56] Boudet, "Socialización del Teatro," 74.

[57] Brecht's work has been palatable to a wide array of contemporary audiences, including other non-Capitalist nations. For instance, his work is more commonly referenced, staged, and studied in China since the 1970s. According to Huizhu Sun, Chinese audiences, like Cuban audiences, enjoy the active thinking

that Brecht solicits from audiences. William Huizhu Sun, “Mei Lanfang, Stanislavsky and Brecht on China's Stage and Their Aesthetic Significance,” in *Drama in the People's Republic of China*, eds. Constantine Tung & Colin Mackerras (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 137-150.

[58] Gerardo Mosquera, “Estética y Marxismo en Cuba,” *Cuadernos Americanos* 5, no. 29 (September-October, 1991): 169-186.

[59] Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, the Mexican-Spanish philosopher, was published repeatedly during the 1960s and 1970s with one of his earliest publications in Cuba, in 1962. Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, “Ideas Estétics en los Manuscritos Económico-Filososóficos de Marx,” *Casa de las Américas* 2, no. 13-14 (July-October 1962): 3-24.

[60] Aguirre, “Apuntes Sobre la Literatura y el Arte,” 108-21.

[61] As commented before, the early 1960s cultural publications offered a wide array of work on aesthetics and the philosophy of culture that included the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser, and Sánchez, to mention three that could hardly be used as theoretical support of Soviet realism.

[62] See Georg Lukács, “Realism in the Balance,” in *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates between Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno*, ed. Ronald Taylor (London: NLB, 1979), 28-59.

[63] Aguirre, “Apuntes Sobre la Literatura y el Arte,” 108.

[64] The debate around expressionism and realism.

[65] Julio García Espinosa, “For an Imperfect Cinema” [1969], in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 1. Theories, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 71-82; Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, “The Viewer's Dialectic,” in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 108-30.

[66] García, “For an Imperfect Cinema,” 81.

[67] Gutiérrez, “The Viewer's Dialectic,” 114.

[68] Oscar Hurtado, “El Arte Abstracto,” *Casa de las Américas* 1, no. 2 (August-September 1960): 80-81.

[69] Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, “Apertura del Primer Congreso de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba,” in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1961]), 46.

[70] Nicolás Guillén, “Informe al Congreso,” in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1961]), 74.

[71] Seymour Menton, *Prose Fiction of the Cuban Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 12-25.

[72] Boudet, *Socialización del Teatro*, 78-80.

[73] Muguercia, "Un Teatro Popular, Masivo y Partidario," 69-72.

[74] For commentaries on film and history, see Héctor García Mesa, "El Nuevo Cine Cubano: Con Motive del Veinticuatro Aniversario del Instituto Cubano del Arte Industria Cinematográficos," *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 126 (February, 1983): 35.

[75] Louis A. Pérez, Jr., "Toward a New Future, from a New Past: The Enterprise of History in Socialist Cuba," *Cuban Studies* 15, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 1-13.

[76] Medin, *Cuba*, 151.

[77] García in Medin, *Cuba*, 151.

[78] Pérez, Jr., "Toward a New Future, from a New Past," 2.

[79] Timothy Barnard, "Death is not True: Form and History in Cuban Film," in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 2. Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 143-54.

[80] Documentary, however, was immediately involved in recording the exciting first years of the Revolution. See Chanan, *The Cuban Image.* See also Julianne Burton, *The Social Documentary in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990); Michael Chanan, "Rediscovering Documentary: Cultural Context and Intentionality," in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 201-19.

[81] For a discussion of some of these films, see Pat Aufderheide, "Red Harvest," *American Film* 9 (March 1984): 28-34.

[82] Italics in the original. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the State" [1970], in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 171.

[83] Medin, *Cuba*, 6.

[84] Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba*, 80-82.

[85] See Fernández, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*, 57.

[86] Fidel Castro in Medin, *Cuba*, 7.

[87] Fernández, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion*, 91.

[88] Ruth Behar, "Post-Utopia: The Erotics of Power and Cuba's Revolutionary," in *Cuba, the Elusive Nation: Interpretations of National Identity*,

ed. Damián J. Fernández and Madeline Cámara Betancourt (Gainsville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 137-40.

[89] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the self*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.

[90] Ernesto Guevara, *El Hombre Nuevo* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Coordinacion de Humanidades, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos, Facultad de Filosofia y Letras, 1965 [1978]), 9.

[91] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 340-72.

[92] Guevara, *El Hombre Nuevo*, 11.

[93] Ernesto Guevara, "El Socialismo y el Hombre en Cuba," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II* (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1960]), 128.

[94] Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 94.

[95] Santiago Alvarez, "Medios Masivos de Comunicación: Cine," in *Literatura y Arte Nuevo en Cuba* (Barcelona: Editorial Estela, 1971), 48.

[96] Pastor Vega, “Cuba: El Cine, la Cultural Nacional,” *Cine Cubano*, no. 73-74-75 (n.d.): 85; “En Cuba el Cine Busca al Público,” *Cine Cubano* 3, no. 13 (n.d.): 13-16.

[97] Enrique Colina, “24 x seg,” *Cine Cubano*, no. 73-74-75 (n.d.): 102.

[98] See Julio García Espinosa, “En Busca del Cine Perdido,” *Cine Cubano*, no. 68 (n.d.): 24-27; García, “For an Imperfect Cinema,” 71-82; García, “Mediations on Imperfect Cinema... Fifteen Years Later,” in *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. 1. Theories, Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 83-85; Gutierrez, “The Viewer's Dialectic,” 108-30; James R. Macbean, “A Dialogue with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: On the Dialectics of the Spectator in *Hasta Cierto Punto*,” *Film Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1985): 22-29.

[99] See McBean, “A Dialogue with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea,” 22-29.

[100] See Chapter 3.

5

Cuban Criticism as a Social Practice

The third issue of *Cine Cubano*, in 1960, printed a short article written by the Cuban film director Julio García Espinosa entitled "Criticism and the Public."[1] In it, García suggested that criticism had to play a strong and revolutionary role in the new Cuba. To do so, the critic ought to practice her/his craft in ways consistent with the necessities of the Revolution and with those of an increasingly aware and media-savvy public. The critic would have to forget the facile and formalist criticism that went hand and hand with North American movie fare. "Together, we will have to approach the more lively content and the most proper form. Criticism will profit the most by observing the progress of the artist in such direction" (13). In the following issue, the director of the Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), Alfredo Guevara expanded on García's ideas in an article titled "Culture and the Revolution" ("La Cultura y la Revolución").[2] Criticism, Guevara contended, must be harnessed in the struggle against imperialism and cultural decolonization. Criticism "must be the product of philosophic and aesthetic positions, the product of an analytical method, the product of the knowledge of reality and of reality's internal contradictions, reality's tendencies and character" (46). In short, criticism would use aesthetics, methodology, and epistemology for the betterment of the Revolution.

In so quickly recognizing the importance and necessity of cultural criticism for the constitution of the field of cultural production, García and Guevara enacted a social disposition to place cultural work within a system of social relationships bound by the grid of power. García defined criticism as a social practice enacted "together" and in close relation to the artist's work. Recognizing the systemic nature of criticism as a social practice, the critic would have to acknowledge the Revolution's, the public's, and the artist's needs. Guevara, already a cultural leader, upped the ante and declared criticism to be subservient to the field of power (government) and practically anointed criticism as a new revolutionary weapon against imperialism. Though the practice of criticism would wage war with philosophy, aesthetics, methodology, and epistemology; its target would be ethics or the constitution of a new "ethos."

Knowing that criticism was thought of as a Revolutionary weapon is not surprising, especially after my discussions in previous chapters. Criticism in Cuba functioned within cultural institutions and thus was and remains an institutionalized type of social practice.[3] Moreover, given that all cultural institutions in Cuba were part of a field of cultural production intimately linked to the field of power, cultural criticism had to respond to the same political requirements as other cultural institutions. And in this, Cuba is different from other nations, where the field of culture presents a diversity of means and interests (see Chapter 7's comments on the U.S. cultural field). In Cuba, criticism, just like the field of culture, abided by cultural policy and the overarching ideological principles of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and the cultural vanguard.

Moreover, and as I mentioned before, substantial evidence shows that in Cuba cultural criticism became part of the political policing of culture.[4] That is, cultural critics took it upon themselves to evaluate work based on cultural and governmental policy, adding to their typical role as gatekeepers of the field. The Heberto Padilla and the *P.M.* cases, discussed in Chapter 3, and the *Hoy* case, discussed in Chapter 4, became cultural problems that involved criticism. In all of these cases at least one of the parties involved acted as cultural critic, at least one of the parties used reviews to address political issues, and at least one of the parties was marginalized, censured, or jailed. In a very real sense, then, it is possible to say that cultural criticism played a role in structuring the field of cultural production and its relationship to the field of power.[5]

Mediating the structures that constituted criticism as a social, cultural, theoretical, aesthetic, and professional activity were systems of ideas that, over time, constituted a *habitus*. This included an hermeneutical template based on aesthetic principles derived from intellectual and political debates. To review, to interpret, and to critique were ideological activities that the vanguard performed to serve the Revolution. Besides regulating the activity of criticism, the same or similar hermeneutics became the theoretical basis for institutional activities and an important criterion in evaluating general aspects of cultural works. As discussed, the revolutionary hermeneutics often included a set of the ideas based on general values and axioms:

Values: Anti-imperialism; Action over theory.

Axioms: the Revolution is equivalent to the nation, and the people; during the 1960s, the people could redeem the vanguard; during the 1970s, socialism could redeem the people.

In addition, the revolutionary hermeneutics included more specific ideas about culture including the following:

Film is an art that must purify the spirit and give Cuba national pride. Film must educate.

Culture is political. This also means that culture mediates between political groups. In addition, culture is a form of governance through aesthetics. Political "distinction" can be obtained by embodying a revolutionary aesthetics.

Culture is transformative. For this reason, culture is expected to represent existence as a series of confrontations.

The cultural vanguard must lead society toward revolutionary change. To achieve this, the cultural vanguard needed to engage in self-negation, decolonization, and a revolutionary ascetics.

A revolutionary aesthetics is transformative. In the Cuban context, this meant abiding by the principles of Marxist aesthetics, such as, Brechtian aesthetics. A common goal was to mobilize audiences to participate by denaturalizing reality, tropes, or definitions of selfhood.

A limited set of objects of aesthetic reflection can be called revolutionary. Among these are national culture, historical themes, and revolutionary reality.

The ideal relationship between people and culture is achieved when cultural works can undo pre-revolutionary behavior and/or develop *conciencia* in the audience. This requires an active audience.

In listing these axioms and values together, one notices that as a whole these axioms and values had the potential to set normative ideas about reality, albeit in different ways. Their efficacy depended on different things. Some of the principles related to ways of interpreting the past and present realities. Imperfect cinema, for instance, was not only a call for a type of aesthetics, but it was also an idea that suggested a reinterpretation of the way previous and foreign film narratives constituted subjects. Similarly, the idea that the Revolution was the only logical result of Cuba's past, a sort of Manifest Destiny, was a call for a re-evaluation of all Cuban histories written before 1959. To historicize the present meant understanding it in terms of confrontation or with the idea that culture is politics. This category of principles was (and is) eminently historiographical in that it constituted hermeneutic principles to historicize Cuba's past and present. At an individual level, these set of principles enticed those Cubans born before the Revolution to re-narrativize their past to fit a new set of valuable histories. One need only to read the many books and publications that use biography (via autobiography, interview, or self-histories) containing implicitly or explicitly the questions "How have you changed?"[6] This question was an invitation to re-evaluate Cuba's past using current values. Relating the re-evaluation of the past to Foucault's idea of technologies of self, I argue that these values and axioms made

historiography (including autobiography) one of the areas that needed to be ethically modified.[7] And, following Cuban discussions on freedom, these values and axioms also invited a re-narrativization of selfhood with the Revolution at the center of the narrative.

A different set of values and axioms constituted not yet realized realities. They related to ideals that individuals should aspire to become and the ideas that should be reflected in their work. Self-negation was perhaps the clearest of these ideals. It requested from the vanguard, and anyone aspiring to occupy a vanguard position, a constant vigilance over one's actions. This set of principles constituted a procedural hermeneutics that helped monitor behavior and that helped discriminate among future actions. Also belonging to this procedural hermeneutics were the axioms of *conciencia*, decolonization, and the idea that film must educate. This procedural hermeneutics encourage individuals to evaluate the present and to constitute an idea of a desirable future. Using Michel Foucault's terminology regarding technologies of the self, these procedural hermeneutics provided *technes* (ways of doing things in the present) and *telos* (goals for self-formation). They helped the Cuban vanguard understand present activities and how these would shape the future. The ways people incorporated them into their lives were, no doubt, varied, but always through action. Either individuals would declare their desire to be a better revolutionary, or they would make this declaration through their work and the decisions that directed their future. Filmmakers and artists, for instance, constructed narratives, images, or sounds that would evoke how good it was to gain *conciencia*; how important it was to decolonize oneself; how

valuable it was to produce cultural work that would engender an active audience.[8] Demonstrating these processes meant recognizing their importance and was a way of testifying as to one's desire to embrace them.

Historiographic and procedural hermeneutic tactics formed a revolutionary hermeneutics that assisted the interpretational and evaluative tasks that cultural workers had to perform to create film and other cultural works, and to comment on them. In this chapter I discuss the official reception of the films *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Lucia* (1968), directed by Humberto Solás, *One Way or Another* (1974), directed by Sara Gómez, *Portrait of Teresa* (1979) directed by Pastor Vega, and *Hasta Cierto Punto* (*Up to a Certain Point,* 1983), also directed by Gutiérrez in terms of their historical contexts and the revolutionary hermeneutics (both procedural and historical). By "official" reception I do not mean to suggest that government personnel performed them. Rather, "official" here refers to the fact that the reviewers worked in cultural institutions and that, as discussed above, cultural institutions saw their policies as furthering the political goals of the Revolution.

Memories of Underdevelopment

Memories of Underdevelopment (referred to as *Memories* from here on) was Gutiérrez's fourth feature film. As one of the founders of ICAIC, Gutiérrez occupied a privileged position in the field of cultural production and, specifically, in the world of film. He was part of the editorial team of *Cine Cubano*, took part in the direction of

ICAIC, helped train new generations of filmmakers, including Gómez, Sergio Giral, and Juan Carlos Tabío.[9] He directed the first feature fictional film of the Revolution in 1960 (*Histories of the Revolution* [*Historias de la Revolución*]) and consistently produced some of the best films in Cuba well into the 1990s.[10] Gutiérrez's institutional identity within ICAIC provided a strong context for the reception of *Memories*.

In addition to Gutiérrez's relative power within the structure of the field of culture, his directorial authority provided a strong context for the reception of *Memories*. Of particular importance was the release in 1966 of the satirical comedy *The Death of Bureaucrat* (*La Muerte de un Burócrata*) which Cuban critics praised for its savvy use of film-history references (to Chaplin, to Hitchcock) and for the way it criticized bureaucracy, a growing problem that was the subject of public debate.[11] By 1968, the year of *Memories*'s release, Cuban film aficionados recognized Gutiérrez as a capable director, a gifted satirist, and a member of the official cultural vanguard.

Though *Memories* remains as one of the most important Cuban films, the film went relatively unnoticed by the cultural community upon its release. In order to explain this, one must remember that its release came only months after Che Guevara's death in the jungles of Bolivia. Guevara's death in October of 1967 brought a grim, overzealous mood to the Cuban social landscape that infused most public culture with new revolutionary vigor. Most journals, and magazines, including *Casa*, *Bohemia*, and *Cine Cubano*, published special issues about Guevara, exulting his actions, words, ideas, and influences on Cuban politics and culture. 1968 was named the "Year of the Guerrilla

Fighter" ("Año del Guerrillero Heróico"). For weeks, the national newspaper *Granma* published articles lauding Guevara, praising his dedication to the revolution everywhere and his ongoing selflessness. In this cultural and political environment, the image of Guevara was transformed from influential to exemplar, and in many of these articles and biographies Guevara was defined not only as the ideologue that championed the idea of the New Man but as its embodiment. As the New Man, Guevara became an icon of national magnitude that impregnated all levels of Cuban culture. The motto "We will become like el Che" ("Seremos como el Che") became, along with "Nation or Dead" ("Patria o Muerte") and "We'll triumph" ("Venceremos"), part of the pantheon of slogans that the Revolution used as ideological framework in the decades that followed.

Given this patriotic mood, it is hardly surprising to find that critics received a film about a timid, self-centered individual named Sergio with calculated apathy. *Memories* opened in Havana on August 17, 1968, in six theaters dedicated to new releases. Despite having already received four international prizes that included the International Cinematographic Festival of Karlovy Vary and the FIPRESCI prize and despite the fact that Gutiérrez was one of the founders of ICAIC, *Granma* did not review the film. Only a brief mention of the film within the context of a new circuit of theaters can be found throughout the months of August to September of 1968. The journal *Unión*, the official cultural organ of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba, UNEAC), also distanced itself from the film when it published, the same year,

a short piece paying tribute to Revolutionary cultural production, which mentioned *Lucia* and other feature films but not *Memories*.[12]

The film itself revolves around some of the themes that had come to be expected from revolutionary culture. It dealt with politics and the political attitudes of Sergio, its protagonist; it represented post-revolutionary Cuban life as formed through confrontation; through its protagonist, it explored the difficulties some had in adapting to the new social expectations, including decolonization; it used some distanciation techniques and attempted to denaturalize the filmic structure by mixing fictional with non-fictional footage; it explored revolutionary reality and the process of undoing pre-revolutionary behavior. Given all of these characteristics, the film should have been reviewed by *Granma*, but it was not, at least not immediately.

The journal *Cine Cubano*, however, edited by Gutiérrez, published several written and photographic essays about the film. The first appeared in August 1967 and consisted of the director's "work notes." Other articles appeared after the film's release, and, because of its substantial international success, the film continued being mentioned in practically every essay dealing with Cuban film thereafter in *Cine Cubano* and other journals.

Gutiérrez's written commentaries and interpretations of the film came a few months before the death of Guevara in October, and thus, his comments inhabited a cultural landscape quite different from the one in which the film would be released a year later and eventually reviewed. In spite of this difference, Gutiérrez's privileged

position within the cultural field and his role as director of the film gave a normalizing character to his words and ideas. Indeed, future references to the film would repeat the themes that Gutiérrez considered important and would replicate and even quote Gutiérrez's words.[13]

Judging by the style of writing, which is very pedagogic, one can infer that Gutiérrez's essay attempted to link the film to the educational goals of revolutionary culture. Indeed, he proposed that the film was the result of learning through experience and was a lesson about how difficult it was to decolonize the self. The essay begins by suggesting that the film is a response to questions posed by history: "Why Memories of Underdevelopment? I remember that during the beginning, immediately after the triumph of the revolution, we all (all) believed that this island…could be transformed overnight in a type of Caribbean Switzerland."[14] Besides posing a question, this paragraph hints to the position from which Gutiérrez is writing. Notice how Gutiérrez differentiates between the two "we's." The one outside the parenthesis indicates a general "we all," one that designates all Cubans. The second "we," underscored by the parenthesis, indicates a second community, a community likely formed by the cultural vanguard, Gutiérrez's peers (he could have written: "we all, including us…" to the same effect). The position of the vanguard is further stressed when Gutiérrez continues a few paragraphs later: "We learn, first of all, that we are barely a farming country." The answer to the question is learned by a "we" that again is different from the second "we's." Later, Gutiérrez refers to the "mentality of our people," a sentence that further

distances himself from the people, the general "we" whose mentality must be changed to overcome, Gutiérrez suggests, underdevelopment (21).

Embracing his duty as a member of the vanguard, Gutiérrez frames *Memories* as a lesson about mental underdevelopment, not just economic. "The new truth is radical. It presupposes not only a new economy, a new political vision, a new society, a new mentality, but also a new man. And that requires more time" (21-22). Meanwhile, he continues, a first step towards subjective transformation must be taken, and this step would be the recognition that all Cubans are formed as subjects by underdevelopment. The revolutionary subjectivity is composed of underdevelopment and revolution to the point that in order to identify fully with the Revolution, Cubans had to assume their condition of underdevelopment (21-22).

This identification was precisely what *Memories* furnished, for it invited the viewer to recognize its own underdevelopment in Sergio, who is presented to the viewer as having to decide between what he considers underdevelopment and revolutionary ideologies. The discursive manifestation of these ideologies is typified in the following table:

Individual	Revolution
Civilization	Underdevelopment
House	Street
The past	The future

As Gutiérrez points out, Sergio always chooses the first column, selecting self-involvement, individuality, European civilization, his house (property), as well as his memories (23). It is interesting to note that according to Gutiérrez all of the positive values are public and all of the negative values are private. Self-involvement, a private activity, is valued less than self-formation, a public activity. Self-formation, thus conceived, required a continuous engagement with the outside world, what Gutiérrez and most members of the intelligence would likely call "reality." The street and not the house was where self-transformation happened. The path toward the Revolution was through the future, not the past, through the recognition of underdevelopment, not the yearning for civilization. Finally, *Memories* is didactic because it furnished a critical stance to reality and toward the viewer's self. Via Sergio, or in contrast with him, the viewer can discover new aspects of reality and awaken a critical sensibility (24).

The film was also didactic because it investigated the procedural nature of *conciencia*. Becoming a revolutionary was a process that some, not all, could achieve. *Memories* also allowed the viewer to identify the elements of the technology of self they would have to undertake in order to reach the state (the status) of a New Man. The first step in the process of transformation was recognizing the underdevelopment within. The second step was recognizing that to become a revolutionary, one would have to rid one's self of the old self and build a new one. Sergio's inability to do so was a cautionary tale about the risks of underdevelopment in a developing society. Finally, a third element of the technology of self was forwarded by *Memories* in the suggestion

that the process of change involved a change of ideology. Sergio's bourgeois and individualistic ideology existed in contrast and tension with the ideology of a transforming society. A new ideology, the film also suggested, is manifested in a new hermeneutic. Sergio's suspicious subjectivity was shown to the viewer through his "odd" hermeneutic tactics; Sergio saw and interpreted the world in ways that separated him from it and that devalued common life and common Cubans.

In talking about the aesthetics of the film, Gutiérrez linked them to trends present in Cuba at the time. Paying homage to Brecht and neorealism, he commented that the film relied on an open language, disarticulated, like a collage where "Objective reality" is brought to the narrative to form a dialectic opposing Sergio's subjectivity. What Gutiérrez referred to as "objective reality" was the documentary footage inserted into the movie as well as the references within the text to actual events and people (24). Though inserting documentary footage can hardly be assumed to create any type of objective reality, Gutiérrez's interest in talking about the film in these terms suggests a type of Marxism concerned with alienation, reification, and ideology and a regard for dialecticism common to other types of Marxist aesthetics.[15]

Though the aesthetic strategies of the film are not uncommon in the Cuban cultural field, it is clear that having Sergio as the main object of reflection could be considered problematic in Cuba even before the death of Guevara. This is evident in that despite the fact that Sergio can provide such useful services to the viewer (such as helping develop a critical stance to underdevelopment), Gutiérrez harshly criticized the

character, almost to excess. It is as if Gutiérrez was trying to erase the possibility of himself being criticized for having created a character that glorified the bourgeoisie. Gutiérrez vehemently dubs Sergio's character as immoral ("He is incapable of loving"), deluded, coward ("he is not capable of assuming the risks the Revolution brought"), and irrational (as he is ill-equipped to describe reality). Gutiérrez's efforts to distance himself from Sergio signals nervousness, a tension within the cultural community and its relationship to the field of power. Regardless of one's position in the cultural field, a cultural work could be used as evidence against a person and hurt one's personal and professional life, and Gutiérrez needed to preempt this possibility.

The issue of *Cine Cubano* that marked the release of the film did not include a review or an essay of the movie.[16] However, it included a photo essay about the film that was four pages long. The first two pages showed photos from the film as well as images from the documentary footage used in the film. The images suggested the tension between the fictive text and reality and the space created by this tension. The next two pages presented a collage of more than twenty images of Sergio Corrieri's face. More than half of the images were the negative image of Sergio (whites go black and vice versa), which gives these photos an ominous feeling. Using negative images evoked the images of horror films and made Sergio's persona monstrous. Two of these images, placed at the center of each page to attract attention, show Sergio wearing a pair of pantyhose over his face, making him look like a burglar and conjoining feelings of illegality and deviance.

These attempts by *Cine Cubano* and ICAIC to discredit the type of subjectivity and individuality that *Memories* dealt with signaled an anxiety about the film's ultimate ideological import. Though conceived as a critique to Cuba's naiveté regarding development and its subjects, the film, as the book had before, could be criticized for glorifying non-revolutionary values and for too ably interpellating its audience with capitalist ideologies. Thus, avoiding a review, ICAIC tactically avoided a confrontation with the institutionalized vanguard. Guevara had died, and Gutiérrez and ICAIC likely feared that, given its type of protagonist, the film could not withstand criticism. This anxiety is one evident in the reviews that followed.

Nicolas Cossio, a regular film writer of the magazine *Bohemia*, wrote about the film in August 1968.[17] Given the themes that Cossio brings up, it is possible to infer that he had read Gutiérrez's original article in *Cine Cubano*. Like Gutiérrez, Cossio criticized the character's inability to engage reality (he is "deluded") by juxtaposing the character's subjective persona with what Cossio, echoing Gutiérrez, calls "objective reality." The review is quite critical of the film, though it criticized it without openly questioning its politics. Rather, what calls the attention of Cossio is the "roughness" of the film, its imperfect aesthetics, and Gutiérrez's inability to narrativize psychological problems. Ultimately, Cossio calculates, the film will be memorable because of its international success, not because of its quality (75).

What is most interesting about Cossio's article is expressed in the following words: "No, I don't share the criteria of criticism benevolent to national cinema, even

less that of paternalistic or interested criticism…I believe that the honest thing to do is dive into the truth" (75). Given the fact that this declaration is a type of truism, perhaps even a cliché ("criticism should be honest"), including it within the piece begs the question of why. Why is the paragraph there? And, what would have happened if the paragraph had not been included? Analyzing this short paragraph sheds light onto the way Cossio understood the practice of cultural criticism, the way criticism played a mediating role between cultural institutions, and the way public references to selfhood defined the individual's civic persona.

First, it is unusual that a cultural critic would feel the need to mention that her/his work should be carried on with honesty. This was not a trivial commentary, particularly at that time. Honesty had been one of the core values of the Revolution, a value that educational and socializing institutions tried to instill in the population since the 1960s. Consequently, to reference honesty was to reference a central characteristic of the New Man, of the Revolution, and given Guevara's role in popularizing the philosophy of the New Man, honesty also referenced him. Moreover, Cossio stated that some criticism in Cuba was carried on in a dishonest fashion, with an interested attitude, in a self-serving manner, unlike his own. These critics, one suspects, attempted to benefit national cinema without regard for what would benefit the Nation. Good criticism, honest criticism, was a revolutionary task, like García stated, required to influence, create, and reproduce the revolutionary field of cultural production. Cossio also created a clear standard of behavior that separated him from the rest. By doing so, he acknowledged a

community-based standard to separate the self from "other." The self, constituted by those vanguards responsible to the Revolution, "dives into the truth"; others do not. Implied is that others may write reviews about cinema but do it in ways that are unethical and self-serving.

Moreover, to suggest that one's work is to "dive into the truth" makes the work not only ethical but also hermeneutic and epistemological. Of course, all interpretation is hermeneutic, but not all interpretants feel compelled to state that theirs is an honest and truthful interpretation. Making such an emphasis gives a clue to the role truthfulness should occupy in the specific practice of reviewing national cinema. For instance, Cossio wrote regularly the cultural criticism section of *Bohemia*, but, of the pieces I read, the review of *Memories* is the only one that mentions honesty. This suggests that the standards of work may be different depending on the type of cultural artifact that is being criticized. Say, it is easier to be critical of North American films and to use the full arsenal of a Revolutionary hermeneutics on capitalist narratives than it is to be critical of national cinema. Other reviewers, Cossio implied, were not doing it. One may speculate about the reasons for this. Among them are the size and cultural influence of ICAIC. As commented upon in Chapter 3, ICAIC had, during the sixties, waged some cultural wars against other institutions and had triumphed. This meant that ICAIC sat strongly in the middle of Cuba's field of cultural production. Another reason may be the recognition that Cuba needed a national cinema and that this had to be nurtured, not harmed or squelched.

Since *Bohemia's* staff, like any other magazine staff, was likely required to print those ideas and words that were necessary to achieve the communicative objective of the piece, the paragraph has the implicit approval of the institution. Cossio and the editorial staff thought that such declaration was then necessary to make the essay successful. What would have happened if the paragraph had not been included? About this I can only speculate, but it is likely that criticizing *Memorias*, like Cossio did, would have been understood in a different fashion, perhaps as a political move, perhaps as a criticism of ICAIC, perhaps as a criticism of Gutiérrez. Any of these options would have placed Cossio and *Bohemia* at odds with the field of power since ICAIC and Gutiérrez were so close to the leadership.

Finally, Cossio's declaration is a brief definition of the writer's ethical make-up (honesty), civic qualities (he feels his honesty is required for the good of Cuba), and individualism. This last aspect is particularly relevant for it suggests the ongoing importance of acting independently from the community. Moreover, this independence is deemed important for the fulfillment of the writer's civic duties. Cossio's declaration is therefore one that fits liberal definitions of selfhood for they suggest that autonomy, a key characteristic of the liberal self and citizen, benefits society.[18]

Elena Díaz published in *Cine Cubano* a review of the film roughly one year and a half after the release of *Memories*.[19] By 1970 the film had benefited from a successful run at theaters, had collected a number of prizes, and the revolutionary fervor brought about by Guevara's death had dwindled. All of these factors gave Díaz the opportunity

to engage the film in a different way, putting together a series of positive arguments regarding the film's aesthetic and political qualities.

For her, the film was an example of a complete artistic work that enriched the cultural national heritage. Asserting the film's national characters, Díaz suggests that Cubanidad is felt in the totality of *Memories* and in each of its parts: the music, the dialogues, and the photography. This ability to express the identity of the nation corresponds to the rightful application of a Cuban aesthetics. Form and narrative, Díaz seems to suggest, express something essentially Cuban that is reinforced by the realism of the characters and by the situations depicted by the narrative (80). Given that Sergio's fictionalized subject position cannot be defended or suggested as exemplar or desirable and, yet, Sergio is the character through which the viewer enters into the *Memories* world, the problem of identification is one that has to be discussed and solved. Díaz proposes that the viewer recognizes situations but does not identify with them. In this way, the relationship of viewer to text is not one of ideological compliance to Sergio's interpellations, but one of objectification of the type of subject position Sergio represents. Once objectified, this subject position can be understood and, perhaps, avoided or eliminated. What Díaz hypothesizes is a viewer who can construct a critical distance in relation to the text and be able to reflect, laugh, and, in general, make an "other" out of Sergio. Accordingly, the viewer is invited to identify with the situations that Sergio is encountering and morally evaluate his inability to join the Revolution.

Perhaps surprisingly, all of these spectatorship maneuvers do not stop the viewer from enjoying the film and from being sutured to the narrative. Díaz assumes that "coherence of action" activates the audience. This quality maintains the attention of the audience and enables them to participate in the action developed on the screen. Binding the viewer to the action is achieved through communication and by sometimes entertaining, sometimes disturbing, and sometimes puzzling the spectator. Díaz's ideas about active audiences are quite different from what we find today in the U.S. academy. For her, to be active is to have a range of experiences through watching film. Typically, in the United States, the notion of an active audience assumes the viewer's critical engagement with the narrative. The audience then may engage in a negotiated or oppositional reading of a text. However, the activity of the audience is theorized in ways similar to Díaz's in some cases: this is the case of audiences viewing radical film, political film, and feminist film. In these cases, U.S. film theorists assume that activity is necessary on the part of the viewer to replicate critically or imagine a subject position from which a criticism of mainstream society may be successful, even if this means to use the point of view (POV) of the camera. Similarly, in Díaz, an active engagement with the narrative replicates the POV of the camera and from this POV the viewer may laugh, criticize the characters, or emotionally relate to them. Díaz, I am certain, believes the film to be a revolutionary statement about the world, and for this reason audience activity can be theorized as a replication of the film's POV.

Diaz interprets the book by Edmundo Desnoes (*Inconsolable Memories*, 1967) that served as the basis for *Memories* as one that is the most interesting when dealing with the cold manner in which Sergio self-analyzes. For her, the goal of *Inconsolable Memories* is to present this subjective catharsis. The book puts down, denounces, this bourgeois ideology. Understood in this way, the book is interpreted as a vision of underdevelopment that pertains to a specific class: bourgeois subjectivity (81). For Díaz, the book's adaptation to the screen (written by Gutiérrez and Desnoes) replicates the goal of the novel and produces a film text that represents bourgeois subjectivity without falling in the trap of denouncing it in facile terms (84). However, that Gutiérrez tries to represent Sergio's subjectivity in a fair and objective way becomes troublesome to Díaz, and she reacts to this discomfort by, on the one hand, testifying her despise for Sergio, and, on the other hand, finding reasons to compliment Gutiérrez's picture. Among these reasons are: the acting is great; the film allows us to explore bourgeois ideology; good narratives are not schematic or Manichean.

Although most cultural institutions ignored *Memories* at its release, the few that commented on it give me important clues to the way criticism was used to present the self publicly. Gutiérrez, the director, presented a piece where he linked his cultural practice to the pedagogic principles of revolutionary culture. In doing so, he reconstituted a notion of cultural work as civic and political work. Moreover, Gutiérrez also used this writing to distance himself from Sergio (the protagonist of *Memories*) and did so vehemently declaring Sergio unfit to live in a revolutionary society. If Gutiérrez

enacted his selfhood in alignment with revolutionary ideas of the time, Cossio's style of selfhood evinces the ongoing influence of liberal notions of autonomy and self, albeit within revolutionary frames of social responsibility. Finally, Díaz presents a writing, published in *Cine Cubano*, that seems exemplar of the type of criticism that revolutionary ideologies required. Her piece carefully walks the film's ideological minefield, and in her journey she manages to support Gutiérrez, criticize Sergio, and qualify the film as imperfect but good revolutionary work. Her criticism as practice shows the type of careful interpretive work that "responsible" critics had to perform to continue existing in cultural institutions while fulfilling a vanguard role.

Lucia

Lucia was released on October 12, 1968, less than two months after *Memories*. It showed in Havana in four theaters and competed for audiences with other Cuban films that included *Memories* and *The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin* (1967, d. García).[20] Unlike *Memories'*s themes of bourgeois retrospection and revolutionary disenchantment, *Lucia* told the story of three women in three revolutions and fitted quite well with the social and political mood of the time. *Lucia* was both a celebration of the revolutionary spirit throughout Cuban history and a recognition of the role women had played in these events.

Like *Memories*, *Lucia* was a film that was textually invested in the Revolutionary hermeneutics. It was political, represented existence as confrontation, narrated Cuba's

history as a series of revolutions while exploring the lives of common women. As important as the general themes were that dominated the narratives, the three segments of the film contrasted behaviors and attitudes associated with capitalism and imperialism such as the gender system of Spanish Cuba and later Machado's Cuba against those of guerrilla characters. This strategy attempted to establish an emotional relationship between the audience and the text by providing an exemplar that was close to them.

The film was not the first Solás project exploring female characters in revolutionary settings. In 1966, he released *Manuela*, a film about a woman guerrilla fighter who gave her life for the struggle against Batista.[21] This film demonstrated how a peasant woman could become a fighter and produce social change. In so doing, the film challenged traditional views of the public performance of gender and class in Cuba and joined public discourses that heralded the Revolution as a social force for the emancipation of women. Photographed in a highly contrasted black and white film, *Manuela* also allowed Solás to experiment with the narrative power of film-as-material and with the composition of dramatic images using high contrasts. What he learned was later used to great success in *Lucia*. Though *Manuela* is perhaps too romantic and the characters one-dimensional and overtly idealistic, the film showed Solás's affinity for developing female characters and his talent at producing powerful and intelligent visual statements, characteristics that would later define *Lucia*.

Representing women's participation in the armed struggles was not unusual during the 1960s, and in 1968 was, in fact, quite common. Besides film, one finds these representations in the news and popular media, in particular media dedicated to women. In general, these representations and narratives inserted women into the revolutionary process by highlighting their participation and success in activities associated with the revolution. For instance, while in 1968 almost every magazine dedicated issues to Guevara's life to commemorate his death, the magazine *Mujeres* deviated slightly by publishing a number of articles about women guerrilla fighters. *Mujeres* started in 1960 offering an interesting mixture of feminist politics, current events, fashion, and cultural news. Women's participation was the emphasis in each of these areas, and this participation was always framed as revolutionary. In this tradition, the 1968 issues of the magazine included articles on Guevara, women's emancipation, hygiene, parenting, animated children's film, and cooking. The magazine's third number that year celebrated Tania, "the Guerrilla Woman" ("La Guerrillera"), a woman fighter who had become a popular icon and who was linked in the mind of most Cubans to Guevara.[22] Tania and Guevara had fought together and were part of the pantheon of heroes together with Camilo Cienfuegos, Fidel Castro, and Raul Castro.

Lucia began screening about the same time that *Mujeres* released the La Guerrillera issue. Though the three Lucías are not, like La Guerrillera, guerrillas (women guerrilla fighters), they nonetheless are involved in revolutionary activities, linking them to La Guerrillera, to Guevara, and making them proper objects of aesthetic

reflection. To mark the historical appropriateness of the film, *Granma* dedicated not one but two weeks to reviewing the film. In addition, during the second week after its release, *Granma* published an interview with Solás. These and other reviews likely contributed to shaping the horizon of expectations of Cuban audiences. In addition, these reviews are evidence of the way cultural workers applied the revolutionary hermeneutics that since "Palabras" had worked under the principles of freedom in form and regulated content.

The reviews share some key characteristics based on the fact that a similar revolutionary hermeneutics was at play and that the reviews were printed through official institutions such as ICAIC (*Cine Cubano*), *Casa de las Americas*, and *Granma*. All the reviewers commented on *Lucia*'s Cuban character, in being a national form of expression. They evaluated *Lucia* in relation to the revolutionary life it represented; they all highlighted how opposing oppressive forces (the domination of Spain, the government of Machado, and pre-revolutionary sexist attitudes, respectively) and joining the battle were necessary ethical work for good citizens; they all saw the characters in relation to how close or how far these characters were from the ideal of the New Man.

In general, the reviews followed the tradition of placing a high value on *Lucia*'s political opinions and its potential uses. That the film gained international praise, for instance, allowed reviewers to talk about the success the Revolution had at creating the institutional and cultural environment for the creation of works of artistic international

merit. The film was "The Consecration of Cuban Cinema," according to *Cine Cubano*, and a landmark for the cinema of Third World countries, according to Alfredo Guevara.[23]

As important as pointing out the characteristics shared by the reviews is commenting on their differences. Among these differences, one that stands out is the role the sex of the reviewer played in determining the focus of the review. Men wrote two reviews (and a few other commentaries) and these concentrated on the film's aesthetic elements and evaluated its quality in terms of Solás's success or failure at using highly innovative formal techniques to narrate the stories. Women wrote three reviews and one interview, and, unlike the men, the women concentrated on issues of gender and sex. All of the women's interventions interrogated the narratives and Solás (in the case of the interview) in terms of sex and gender of the protagonist. The reviews in particular investigated the fidelity with which the social world of the Lucías was represented.

The fact that the sex of the reviewers strongly determined the basis for interpreting and evaluating *Lucia* suggests that the Revolutionary hermeneutics that I have been discussing gave latitude to cultural workers to enact different subject positions and structural dispositions. It offered different ways to enact the hermeneutic framework and different positions from which to gaze at the work. I will be returning to this point after I discuss the reviews in detail.

The two sets of reviews and commentaries differed in that one centered in form evaluation and the other in content evaluation. Since "Palabras" and throughout the 1960s, form had been given freedom while content had been given a social responsibility to express reality "within the Revolution." Henceforth, in the case of *Lucia*, both textual systems (form and content) were proper objects of reflection for critics. What adds relevance to the difference among reviews is that they are grouped by sex precisely in a film that centers on female character. And that this difference constituted two politically valid strands of evaluative judgments: one, judging the aesthetics of the work; two, judging the content of the narratives.

The reviews by Daniel Díaz and Roberto Meyer characterize *Lucia* as art. For Meyer, *Lucia* is auterist cinema, [24] while for Díaz, *Lucia* is a "work of art." [25] Meyer compares it to the auteur works of Lucino Visconti, Akira Kurosawa, Ingmar Bergman, and Orson Welles while Díaz compared it to Bergman. Both critics seem to use the comparisons to legitimize their evaluations and interpretations. They use directors' names as keywords that hail the cognoscenti and that tell them "I am one of you." But the cognoscenti, as well as the rest of the readers of *Granma* and *Cine Cubano*, also inhabit a social world in which Cuban film has the responsibility to be truly Cuban, truly national. As a result, Meyer and Díaz link the film to these directors but return to the island and to the nation and claim *Lucia* as a true expression of Cuba. In both cases, after comparing the film to Bergman et al., the reviewers point out that Solás's style is his own and within the Cuban tradition. For Meyer the film is "Cubanisimo," which is

an expression that hyperbolizes the Cuban character of the film. For Díaz, the film "has indicated the beginning of Our Cinema, with our character, where fiction has grafted its roots within the most profound of our idiosyncrasies" (ibid.).

Given that one of the goals of Law 169 was to promote national culture, hailing *Lucia* as a film that invigorated the nation can be seen as a way of paying tribute to the first Cuban cultural policy. But that Meyer and Díaz concentrates on the film's style and structure were also tributes to the 1960s formal openness. Díaz wrote a long review where he addresses each of the three vignettes in terms of their aesthetic and formal qualities, downplaying the ideological elements of the film. In his analysis, he comments on the film's structures and the relationship between the film and genre and gives praise or criticism to parts or elements of the film based solely on aesthetic conventions.

"Lucía 1895," a story developed in over an hour, is, according to Díaz, the best of the three stories. The story narrates in melodramatic fashion the story of Lucía, an older, single-woman, immersed in the sexual conventions of the time, who falls in love with Rafael, a Spanish-Cuban man working for the Spanish army. The betrayal by Lucía's lover results in the killing of her brother and a military defeat of the revolutionary guerrilla army. Lucía goes mad and kills her lover with a knife. Diáz's evaluation centers on the aesthetic excess of the narrative and criticizes it when form overtakes or obstructs narration. Of particular interest to Diaz are three powerful scenes, all of which were treated with visual characteristics that denaturalize them and confer them with a

great emotional content. These scenes are the most flawed scenes in this section; yet they are, according to Diaz, the ones that show the directorial potential of Solas. For instance, Díaz asserts, a scene depicting a party of women sowing uniforms for the guerrilla army that ends in a dance where the camera is circling the room becomes a vertiginous scene that needed some extra-cutting. Yet, even though long, this scene, like the others, showed the explosive force of Solás's formal treatments of national narratives.

"Lucia 1932," the second story, shows Solás's unusual sensibility for poetic language. Regardless, according to Díaz, it is a piece that lacks the force of the first and third parts. Given that the historic reality that it narrated was uncomfortably close to 1968, Solás shied away from having a strong historical eye and making historical propositions. Instead, Solás produced a narrative with an ambiguous ending that foreclosed the possibility of organic wholeness.

The film's last episode is only briefly commented upon, though it is hailed as having a stronger ideological transcendence because it dealt with current social problems: machismo and the discrimination of women. Given that this episode was shot in a less affected way, in a neorealist style, without formal frivolities, Díaz does not comment extensively on its aesthetics or on the narrative possibilities and formal connotations of the episode's apparent non-intrusive style. He chose instead to mention briefly the story's social implications and to criticize the social vices that served as its inspirations.

As already mentioned, Meyer also interprets *Lucia* as auteurist work and centers his evaluation and interpretation on the film's aesthetic elements. His position however is more political than Díaz's and exceeds Díaz's formalist analysis by questioning the film's successes and failures at using aesthetic elements to engage political issues. For instance, in the final scene of "Lucia 1895," in which Lucía stabs her lover to death for his betrayal, Meyer comments: "The lunacy and madness almost acquire the meaning of an acceptance of *conciencia*."[26] Hinting that a more desirable outcome to the story could have been a complete concientization signals that those narrative conclusions were common and politically attractive. Meyer's review provides another example of revolutionary hermeneutics applied to film criticism. In his opinion, this segment concentrates too much on the exploration of private emotions to be able to represent history. In his interpretive framework, Meyer imagines history, particularly revolutionary history, a narrative better described by public actions and by multitudes.

"Lucia 196…" is Meyer's favorite segment. He finds this segment didactic, light, and without complex formal arrangements to distract from the telling of the story. The apparent realism of the segment, which includes a less affected style of acting, is able to posit the ideological problems in its clearest light. This segments narrates the story of a truck-driver who has joined the Revolution yet forbids his wife Lucía from working and learning to write and read. "[I]t presents the inevitable frictions between the great social task and private lives not fully integrated into it, between the change of system and the most difficult change of mentality" (57). Meyer's aestheticism reduces the film to a

system of meanings, narrative strategies, and filmic devices able or unable to reflect or advance the political and ideological goals of the Revolution.

The reviews by women are significantly different. The three were printed at the beginning of 1969 in *Cine Cubano* and each covered one of the three segments of the film. As commented before, these reviews did not center on the aesthetic characteristics of the film, but rather, each reflected on the content of the narrative as it related to historical realities.

Right from the first paragraph, Camila Henriquez Ureña lets the reader know that her style of interpreting and writing about the film is different from that of her male peers. To her, *Lucia* deals with the lives of women and the social conditions in which these developed. "Lucía, the protagonist, is at the same time the Cuban woman interpreted in three époques representative of her development…"[27] Compare this with Meyer, who had written that the film consisted of "complex analyses of feminine psychologies."[28] Meyer implies that something is dark and perhaps even pathological about the psyche of women, so much that it deserves to be analyzed through deeply aestheticized narratives. In contrast, Henriquez sees the piece as an examination of how Cuban women existed in specific social situations. For her, *Lucia* is an exploration of the relationship of women to society. Instead of pathologizing the female psyche, Henriquez sets the basis for a feminist critique of society.

Henriquez's review segments *Lucia* on the basis of the development of women, society, and the social definition of love. Each vignette marks a historically specific

stage of these developments, and Solás parallels a diverse set of oppressions that function to determine the private destinies of women, the well-being of society, and the set of available gendered subjectivities. According to Henriquez, *Lucia* shows how women moved from being prisoners of suffocating public expectations of their private lives in 1895 to a more evolved being. "Lucia 196…" shows the character-type of a proto-revolutionary woman who is able and willing to question the trappings of patriarchy, even when enacted by pseudo-revolutionary men.

Similarly, Cuban society moves from being a Spanish colony in 1895 to becoming a place where freedom and equality can exist. "Similarly to women, the society to which she belongs, fights to discover, define, and affirm the essence of its being."[29] Finally, love is transformed from a relationship in which women are subjected to an equitable relationship. This transformation changes the subjective make-up of women and men by calling for a transformation in the meaning of masculinity and femininity. For Henriquez, following the ideas of Guevara, the Revolution is a social structure that allows the existence of social equity, and the development of women's true self. *Lucia* then becomes a narrative that both shows the ideal relationship between people and society and explains Cuba's present as the natural evolution of Cuba's historic trajectory.

Henriquez's style of reflecting on the film depends on an understanding of politics and oppression that is different from Meyer. For instance, when talking about "Lucia 1895," she doesn't blame Lucía for the killing of her brother, as Meyer suggests.[30] For

Henriquez, Lucía's lack of political formation and the social pressures she experienced to secure a husband determine the tragic outcome. The type of *conciencia* that could have prevented this from happening was not available to Lucía and the women who surrounded her. Henriquez also reminds the reader that a number of exceptional women fought against the Spanish, but this was not an option accessible to most.

Renee Mendez Capote is an unusual commentator for the second vignette because she lived during the "Machadato," which is the historical context to "Lucia 1932," and she used her experiences to evaluate the historical accuracy of the segment.[31] The Machadato refers to the period between 1925 and 1933 when Gerardo Machado was president of Cuba. Machado, a member of the ruling class, governed Cuba in a pro-American way and was supported by the United States even though he used blatant repression and violence against dissenting political forces.[32]

Mendez's use of autobiographical material to review and contextualize the film is a necessary occurrence since all epistemological, phenomenological, and hermeneutical frameworks are constituted through experiences. So, each reviewer whom I have analyzed has used autobiographical material to perform their tasks of interpreting the personal and social significance and meaning of each particular film. This use is however typically unacknowledged. What is different about Mendez is that she writes a description of her own past experiences to interpret and validate "Lucia 1932." This has several implications. Aside from the unconscious ways in which her past informed her present interpretation of the world (the film), she had to put consciously together some

of her memories in a narrative form to use as evidence. This likely meant selecting among her memories those that better illustrated the social reality that "Lucia 1932" addressed or represented and those that matched her feelings and ideas regarding the movie. In either case, experiences would have to be narrativized in a coherent and rhetorically efficient way. Though her recalling and retelling cannot be assumed to be truthful account of history, they evidence her understanding of the way her life had to be narrativized in order to fulfill the institutional requirements of ICAIC and Cine Cubano, the social requirements regarding her subject position as a woman vanguard, and her own personal ideas about how her self should be publicized.

Her writing shows characteristics not uncommon to someone writing in an academic journal. She tries to show her expertise about the film by signaling her expertise about the époque the film represents and by evaluating the film's accuracy and insight into that époque. She recalls how things were during the Machadato, how women had to live their lives, and how society was structured. She also tried to show herself a proper spokesperson for Cine Cubano and a proper reviewer of a film dealing with the Revolution. This was accomplished by demonstrating her past and current political identities.

Mendez writes about a historical transition occurring in the 1930s in Cuba. Before and during the Machadato, she recalls, social, sex, and gender conservatism were the norm, and most women had a limited range of options for the private and public lives. Marriage was the rule and working outside the house was considered improper. Mendez

recalls what people use to say about women working outside the home: “No nurse enters my home; I cannot allow such whores into my home.”[33]

In her narrative, Mendez informs us that the dictatorship of Machado and the ensuing social unrest changed some of the social structures around women, and some of these changes allowed for a more political identity and, even, freedom. “Some,” Mendez comments, “like Lucía, arrived to [their own liberation] through love” while others arrived “to [their] liberation through the awakening of that conciencia” (9). The economic collapse of Cuba during the 1930s, Mendez argued, resulted in more women joining the labor force and this continued changing social expectations for women. Echoing Engels, and as discussed in Chapter 4, Mendez states that the main cause for women’s oppression and subsequent liberation was economic (12). Lucía is the product of this changing landscape, and, given her personal and historical limitations, she is a proper revolutionary example. Moreover, Lucía’s lover is also presented as a revolutionary exemplar for he chooses to risk his life despite knowing that Lucía is pregnant with his offspring. The view that a true revolutionary gives priority to the social over the personal is espoused both by Mendez and Solás.

The way that Mendez uses personal information and anecdotes is different from the way she uses general knowledge. While the previous argument was presented through historical facts, some of her experiences pepper the narrative and give it a more personal tone. In a long paragraph in which Mendez tries to illustrate economic changes during Machado’s tenure, she reminisces about the low salaries of the time and the

devaluated currency. After mentioning the salaries of her illustrious uncle (a physician who earned a state pension), she comments: “The position of Director of Beaux Arts, which I occupied in October 1933, was paid 100 pesos”(9). These two pieces of information are, of course, quite telling about Mendez’s class and economic background. In order to make up for her obvious wealth and education, Mendez continues her anecdote by recalling how during those same times she and her sister would economically help the wife of Juan Marinello every time he was arrested. Since the Revolution began, Marinello has become one of the most important figures of radicalism during the 1930s, and his name could be used (and was used) to conjure up a social affinity with the 1930s social and leftist causes.

The way of qualifying personal knowledge with political and ideological commentaries is evidence of the deep politicization that members of the vanguard had to show in public. It also suggests how politicizing oneself was a way of gaining social and cultural credibility. Knowledge, in particular historical knowledge, could be made proper by identifying the subject position from which it had been acquired. That Mendez was wealthy mattered, but what mattered the most was that she was always a sympathizer of radicals.

Graziella Pogolotti reviewed “Lucia 196…” using a contextual approach to the segment similar to Henriquez’s.[34] Like Henriquez, Pogolotti comments on the social and economic processes that allowed the growing liberation of women. Pogolotti also argues that the economic changes since the Machadato made necessary the presence of

women in the labor force, thus, restructuring the gender and sex systems. From secretarial positions, to education, literature, and medicine, women augmented the number of areas where they could participate. Pogolotti argues that these changes did not totally erase the social expectations regarding women's private lives. These expectations, which included marriage and a life of social dependence on men, continued affecting women's public and private lives. "The true goal of university education," Pogolotti argued, "was to secure marriage with a professional. The conquered freedom [was] relative and based on appearances" (41).

Pogolotti creates a narrative that places the Revolution in the role of "savior of women." According to her, the Revolution destroyed that society of appearances and economy of subservience. In spite of this, conventions and prejudices, such as machismo, that the bourgeoisie had spread to all social classes survived. The Revolution, therefore, had to strive to change both the public realities that were the foundation of gender inequalities and the private behaviors through which inequality survived. As imagined by Pogolotti (and most cultural workers affiliated with institutions), the Revolution was the fuel of *Bildung*; the Revolution was a pangeneric structure that transformed the material reality and the mental make up of inequality.

Like Henriquez, Pogolotti uses narrative techniques that in the United States have been associated with feminist writing to review "Lucia 196…." In addition to historicizing oppression, Pogolotti uses the personal experiences of women to match or contrast reality as well as to explain or frame reality. She uses the life of Adela Legrá,

the actress who plays Lucía in this segment, as a way of giving historical validity to the fictional narrative. The biographical data of Legrá and its comparison to Lucía constitutes the core of Pogolotti's hermeneutics.

Legrá's life is presented to the reader in a way that replicates the narrative Solás uses to depict Lucía's life. The way Pogolotti uses Legrá's biographical data is illustrated in the following:

> "Now you know how to read," they told Adela and at that time that was enough. At 14, she faced a decision "to either fall in the void or to marry." They offered her the opportunity of a better life. In Caimanera, with the nearby military base, a lot of women took that road. Adela continued studying, more or less on her own. At the beginning, her man does not place obstacles to her. Only to a limit, because "the woman mustn't know more than the man." She pushes him to continue improving himself. They collaborate in the clandestine fight. The man has the initiative and the woman cooperates. They hide people, give directions for taking the command center. The man loses his job at the base, and they must leave town, and they began to work in the fields. The woman also works. It is necessary for the survival of all in harsh times and does not imply that she is emancipated (16).

Legrá eventually becomes involved with the Revolution through the Literacy Campaign. Later, she helps harvest sugar cane and becomes an activist for the Federación de Mujeres (FMC). While Legrá is working for the FMC, Solás invites her to be the protagonist of his film *Manuela* and, later, one of the protagonists in *Lucia*. In Pogolotti's narrative of Legra's life and review of Solás's film, the relevance of these two discreet forms of reality, and what makes them proper objects for her reflection, is that a woman is at the center of both the fictional and real narratives and that these narratives share similar symbolic/social constraints: "how the woman-object becomes the protagonist of her own destiny" (17). Pogolotti, like Solás, narrativizes the

transformation of women in concrete relation to the Revolution, and like Solás's filmmaking, her writing is highly emotional, inspirational, and liberating. This is so because it explores the inner forces of Legrá and Lucía: their willingness to change even when change means risking loosing their male partners. These narratives of inner growth implicate the reader/viewer's rational and emotional structures.

Pogolotti finds in Legrá's life a process of concientization similar to the awakening Lucía experiences in the film. From subject to actor, this trajectory follows similar steps: 1) Legrá and Lucía experience the impact of the 1961 Literacy Campaign. 2) Voluntary labor. In the case of Legrá, this happens when she joins the FMC. Lucía experiences it by rejecting the prohibition against work. Lucía joins the Revolution, participating with her back-breaking work at a salt mine. 3) Both women participate in the defense of the germinal society. And finally, 4) the transformation of both women is not presented as isolated, for they both transform the institutions that defined them. Legrá brought a rich and textured acting style to the film, arguably because of the intimate knowledge she had of Lucía's inner-life, but also because of the way she had come to acting. With little acting training, and without artificial measures, Legrá's personality explodes in the film and vibrantly displays the rich emotional texture that the Lucía character required. Lucía, Pogolotti observes, "produces the modification of the matrimonial relationship" and of the Revolution that relies on it (17).

In the end, there is a clear distinction between men's and women's reviews of *Lucia*. The men tend to emphasize the aesthetic aspects of *Lucia*, judging it mostly in

terms of artistic merit. Accordingly, *Lucia* is deemed revolutionary not only because it dealt with Cuba's revolutionary past, but also because it establishes a distinctive revolutionary aesthetic and a national film tradition. Solás's use of a diverse aesthetic palette represented Cubanidad, and the stories of the three Lucías fitted neatly within the political vernacular of the national as revolution. Because of this emphasis, Meyer, Cossio, and Díaz rely mostly upon their knowledge on film aesthetics and film traditions in critiquing the film text. In so doing, they acknowledge a community (readership) of film buffs interested in *Lucia* for its aesthetic qualities. Moreover, they performed their public selves in reference to ideas of professionalism that defined film criticism as a type of reflection on form, aesthetic traditions, and general social themes.[35]

Very differently, the women critics were interested in *Lucia* for its historical representations of Cuba's gendered past and as testimony of the sacrifices of women in revolutionary periods. If Henriquez, Mendez, and Pogolotti deem the film revolutionary, they do so because the film educates viewers about women's lives and women's participation in Cuban history and because the film illustrates a more complex, because more gendered, notion of social and economic oppression. The importance of a reality behind the fictionalized narratives is underscored by the women reviewers' attention to the historical accuracy of the three Lucías and to the way social theories of gender were woven into each review. Moreover, Henriquez, Mendez, and Pogolotti performed their reviews using what in Western feminism could be considered

typically feminist: Henriquez used feminist theory to explain “Lucia 1985”; Mendez used personal experiences to contextualize “Lucia 1932”; and Pogolotti used a woman’s biography to illuminate the fictional narrative of “Lucia 196…” These writers fulfilled their professional tasks by performing their sex, highlighting those things that concern them as sexed individuals. Thus, issues of accuracy were more important than whether the film resembled Jean-Luc Godard’s work, and the stories narrated were more relevant than arguing that the film was truly Cuban. Moreover, the methods used to carry out their writings did not rely on a “mastery” of cinema but relied on personal experiences, autobiography, and feminist Marxist theory.

Reviews and commentaries on *Memories* and *Lucia* have continued until the present, and the personal and social of these social acts (the acts of reviewing and commenting on culture) has changed overtime. At the end of the 1960s, reviewing *Memories* required the critic to create a careful distinction between understanding the main character Sergio and identifying with him. These public performances of selfhood by reviewers and even by Gutiérrez have to be understood in terms of their historical contexts (the death of Guevara and the ensuing politicization of Cuba) and not only in terms of *Memories*’s textual characteristics. In fact, even this textuality and its meanings have changed over time. We need just remember that Gutiérrez and Cossio criticized the aesthetics of the film as “rough around the edges.” Yet, over the following years, the film has been recognized as aesthetically and ideologically savvy. Three factors came together to produce this effect. First, in the years that followed the release of *Memories*

the film continued collecting international prizes, giving international credibility to the Cuban efforts in creating a new "post-colonial," socialist, Latin American, and revolutionary culture. Second, the economic crisis at the end of the decade, the fiasco of the 1970s sugar harvest, and the economic reorganization of the 1970s reduced the number and ideological range of films in the years that followed, and this, in turn, reduced the likelihood that a film produced in Cuba would make a mark on foreign markets. Third, the internal cases of cultural repression continued dampening the field of cultural production, making it necessary to recognize "some" of Cuba's culture as both extraordinary and revolutionary.

Memories and *Lucia* were ideal vehicles for these internationalist goals. Internally, however, *Lucia* was the film embraced by cultural workers as undoubtedly revolutionary. Either because its aesthetics were unique or because it explored the oppression of women and their participation in revolutions, *Lucia* clearly addressed the issues that would make a proper revolutionary art. It was political; it taught viewers some lessons on how to become revolutionaries. Moreover, it was a proper film in that it embraced a national aesthetics. It dealt with a proper object of reflection, and it showed the revolutionary zeal of its makers.

One Way or Another

The number 52-53 of *Cine Cubano*, which featured the three reviews by Díaz, Henriquez, and Pogolotti was evidence of the efforts revolutionary cultural institutions

undertook in order to incorporate the cultural work of women. Echoing the struggles for transformation represented and narrativized by *Lucia*, ICAIC was an institution in search of *conciencia*, struggling to move away from preconceived notions including machismo. Though I am not attempting to write a history of the role of women in ICAIC, it is necessary to draw a couple of points that illustrate ICAIC's relationships to women as cultural workers and that can help contextualize the ways women, sex, and gender were affected by institutional practices, including the use of women, sex, and gender as objects of aesthetic reflection.

Women have been involved in ICAIC since its creation in 1959, but their involvement has been stratified by gender expectations. This has meant that women occupied positions somewhat related to stereotypical gender roles or, when women occupying non-typical jobs, that their presence was seen as extraordinary. Carmelina García, for instance, in ICAIC since 1959, was in charge of the Costume Department,[36] and, not surprisingly, her department employed mostly women. That this type of work was one where many women could be found is not surprising. It fits neatly with social expectations of women and their work. But even the conditions of this type of work were seen as too harsh for women. García herself defined the work in her department in sexed and gendered terms. In an interview with *Mujeres* in 1974, she commented: "[The work] has a schedule difficult for women. The production work in costumes sometimes requires living outside the home for up to three months, and living in tents and in the outdoors. Besides tailoring, the woman has to enjoy cinema" (47). The first part of her

comments is a statement to the fact given that many women in Cuba were (and still are) expected to take care of the family. But the last part of the commentary uses a language that suggests that women were incapable of enduring the same challenges as men (by living in tents) and that they are incapable of committing to the same schedules.

The realities of work within ICAIC did not seem conducive to women's work. Rebeca Valdéz, a laboratory technician who specialized in 35mm film and who studied in Prague, was part of a group of technical personal who in 1963 included several women (47). By the end of the 1960s, the only woman who remained was Valdéz. In reading about the way ICAIC recruited women, it is evident that sexism was quite common and was expressed by emphasizing the special hardships that a woman would have to endure to survive the job. For instance, Marta Planas, a young woman being trained by and for the film printing laboratory of ICAIC, recalls that "From the first day they told us that the job at the lab was hard for a woman, and that we should think about it" (47). Though she does not recall any blatant rejection by the rest of the (mostly male) lab workers, they expressed surprise at her involvement in the training and at her ambition to become a lab worker.[37]

Sara Gómez was one of the few women-directors at ICAIC and one of the early products of ICAIC's training. She became involved with the institution in 1961 and throughout the 1960s worked as an assistant director for Gutiérrez, Jorge Fraga, and Agnes Varda. Also during the 1960s, Gómez began directing her own projects. As it was expected from all the trainees at ICAIC, she began working on documentaries and

directed ten in roughly a decade. ICAIC's leaders believed that documentary training was essential to develop filmmakers' understanding of their social role and also to develop the filmic and narrative techniques that could later be used to produce feature films.

Gómez's identity is key to understanding the themes and film aesthetics of *One Way or Another* as well as in the way upon which her work was later commented. As an AfroCuban woman and as someone who repeatedly filmed issues of popular culture, Gómez brought a unique perspective to her first and only feature film. The film touched on the problems of gender, race, and class and did so using narrative devices that questioned the separation between fiction and non-fiction. In exploring these themes and the narrative potential of the fiction/non-fiction dialectic, she acted on her beliefs regarding the role of film in society. She states: "Cinema, for us, is inevitably partial, determined by a *toma de conciencia*, the result of a definite attitude in the face of the problems which confront us, of the necessity to decolonize ourselves politically and ideologically, and of breaking with radical values, be they economic, ethical, or aesthetic."[38]

If the critics' sex worked to stratify the type of interpretation had of *Lucia*, cinema as an analytical tool and decolonizing force became the aspects that catalyzed reviewers of *One Way or Another*. Each of the reviewers evaluated and valorized the film in terms of how it represented and explored reality and how the film investigated real contemporary social problems. Framing the film as a project aimed at producing

knowledge fitted well with the changing role science and theory played in Cuban cultural communities during the 1970s. Heavily influenced by Althusser's work, Cuban discourses on culture and politics had changed from an emphasis on praxis to one on science and philosophy.[39] This accounted for the relationship between ideology and epistemology as proposed by Althusser. Given Althusser's unusual insights into the role Marxist theory should play in the analysis of ideology and an increasing awareness of the difficulty in transforming certain ideologies common to Cubans (such as machismo and work attitudes), evaluating cultural work in terms of scientific discourse constituted a step forward in cultural criticism. In addition, this approach provided a bridge to past cultural policies that understood film as educational.[40]

While *Memories* and *Lucia* were accepted as examples of good, responsible revolutionary filmmaking (*Memories* a bit later than *Lucia*), reviewers partially criticized both films. This was not the case with *One Way or Another*. All of the reviews were positive and none mentioned any negative elements of the film. This is partly due to the fact that Gómez died in 1974, before the film was released. Reviewers highlighted this as well as her AfroCuban ethnicity which made it practically impossible to criticize the film or to criticize her decisions as a filmmaker. Additionally, the film could also be interpreted as a scientific endeavor. As such, the film was seen less as an attempt to create reality than as an attempt to explain and problematize it.

I imagine that reviewers who were given the assignment to review Gómez's film might have known from the outset that they could not comment negatively on the film.

The reviewer's duty then became to find an interpretive framework that would allow her/him to compliment director and film. Because of its sparse, documentary-like aesthetics, its themes, and the tropes that denaturalized the film's fictive status, *One Way or Another* could be interpreted as a successful application of science to filmmaking. For instance, Carlos Galiano, reviewing in *Granma*, refers to the film as a "sociological analysis of marginalization and its manifestations in the psychological, moral, and cultural behavior of those who had been marginalized before the Revolution."[41] Also, according to Gerardo Chijona, Gómez's film "reveals and analyzes in depth the conflict between old cultural habits found in marginalization."[42]

Each review framed the film in terms of its relationship to reality, and this became central to its interpretation. I place an emphasis on this aspect of the reviews because the idea of science interpenetrated Cuban culture and institutions in such a way that it became one of the main ways of organizing and presenting knowledge. For instance, in my research about cultural institutions, I found an over-abundance of essays that spoke about cultural development in numeric terms. These reports would make culture into a quantifiable realm and, in so doing, would rely on citing the number of books published, the number of art schools, and so on. In contrast, there is a troublesome scarcity of work dealing with culture from an anthropological or cultural studies point of view. In addition to working as a way of approaching research, scienticism served as a gate-keeping ideology for research in Cuba.[43]

The reviewers inscribed the film into the scientific method, in particular as the method applied to sociology. The briefest of reviews, Galiano's, published October 22, 1977, two weeks after the film opened on Havana's new release circuits, interprets *One Way or Another* through a revolutionary hermeneutic and the scientific method to give praise to "Sarita" and to the film. He argues that *One Way or Another* educates the viewer about the roots of social marginalization by providing an analysis of the effects of wide social structures on individuals.[44] According to Galiano, the film uses documentary footage of the demolition of a poor neighborhood in Havana as an allegory for the decolonization individuals must undergo in order to become true revolutionaries. Mario, one of the central characters, is presented as caught between two realities, one of which he must choose. The pre-revolutionary macho and abusive past is represented through the character of Mario's friend Humberto who tries to pull him back toward more traditional attitudes. Mario and Humberto work together and are the product of similar poverty-stricken backgrounds where machismo is the rule and taking advantage of the Revolution is common. The old self, Galiano continues, is destined "to be extinguished in the same way the old socio-economic order was" (5). Mario's motivation for this social and personal change is represented in the character of Yolanda, a middle-class school teacher who has sacrificed her privileges for the Revolution and who now works, not without conflicts, teaching in a poor neighborhood. Her romantic relationship with Mario gives moral support to his steps toward development and functions, Galiano observes, to establish a dialogue between both

characters. Though the film's final resolution is ambiguous, Galiano believes that Gómez's sense of optimism in the process of social and personal transformation is evident precisely by ending the film with a dialogue between Yolanda and Mario. The dialogue is left open, suggesting that continuous dialogue is key to the processes of transformation.

The same scenes of building demolition that Galiano saw as allegories are, according to Chijona, explanatory devices used as specific kinds of argumentation.[45] He is as interested as Galiano in explaining the film as science, but he sees the use of non-fictional and fictional footage as an analytic strategy aimed at explaining the personal and subjective experiences of the fictional characters as resulting from general social structures such as urbanization (the demolition scenes), religion (Gómez uses footage of the Abakuá religion to illustrate points on traditional macho culture), poverty, and crime. Chijona explains: "Inserting documentary footage and testimonies in a fictional story, *One Way or Another* presents an interesting narration that, on the one hand, introduces us to a world authentically human, while at the same time it gives us the analytic elements to explain the behaviors—static and evolutive—of the different characters" (104). According to Chijona, Gómez uses these two narrative styles as complementary lines of argumentation that together better explain one reality. This reality is manifested at the general and particular levels where the general and particular are dialectically interrelated.

Chijona's rationalistic interpretation of the film's formal characteristics suggests a belief in a type of revolutionary aesthetic that is only marginally related to continental Marxist aesthetics and is a departure from the otherwise popular Brechtian aesthetics. At the time, Marxist aesthetics was heavily influenced by poststructuralism, and *Screen* theory was becoming popular in Europe and the North American continent. More in line with the Althusser of "A letter on Art to André Daspre" and with Lacanian psychoanalysis, Marxist aesthetics of the time was heir to an aesthetic tradition that understood art's liberatory potential in terms of art's ability to exceed reason. Brecht belonged to this tradition. Thus understood, film had the potential to decolonize only when it went beyond the tradition that engendered it, and when it allowed for a reflection, as Althusser would state, "of the ideology to which [the film] allude[d]."[46]

Chijona clearly saw *One Way or Another* as a film that educated viewers. In his view, fiction and non-fiction are two ways of explaining reality that complement each other. Unlike Brechtian aesthetics, fiction and non-fiction were not used to show the ideology that engendered the film or to question the boundaries of fiction and of realism. As two types of arguments, Chijona forwarded, mixing fiction and non-fiction gave the film a greater educational power than that of a straight documentary. "Because the cold documentary analysis is not enough to elicit a reflection on the theme of misery and ignorance of marginal people…what gives validity and efficacy to this operation [in the film] is the way in which these social factors insert themselves into the anecdote."[47] The success of the narrative relied on giving a human expression to those external

factors and in showing how difficult it was to eliminate the burden of the past. Chijona saw the film's biggest social and aesthetic values in its use of popular culture to show the difficulties of decolonization.

Decolonization was central also to Rigoberto López's essay on *One Way or Another* published in *Cine Cubano*.[48] According to him, decolonization is necessary for Cuba's development and a necessary step toward socialism. He explained decolonization as "the organized violence of oppressed people to gain independence; the violence thereafter to transform society and to transform the individual" (107). Decolonization was an ideological struggle that depended for its success in analyzing "the particular of this fight in areas of our national reality" (107). This is what, according to López, the film addressed.

When looked at in relation to the revolutionary hermeneutics, decolonization, as a discursive, theoretical, and ethical construct, became central to the discursive hermeneutic efficacy of the Revolution. The concept (or discourse) of decolonization encompassed a cultural goal that is similar to the maxim "Revolutionary film and art must educate." It also aided the recognition that culture was political, film was transformative, and the vanguard should be exemplary through self-negation. It helped support the thesis that the proper aesthetics is transformative and that it should be an exploration of national culture that can generate *conciencia*. Thus, given the importance of the idea of decolonization, López is giving Gómez's film the highest honors in claiming that it decolonizes.

According to López, Gómez understood the problematic of marginalization in contemporary Cuba because she had dealt with it personally (as a Black woman) and professionally (by filming ten documentaries roughly dealing with the issue). Gómez was aware "of the conflict between the survival of inherited values" in marginal communites "and of the cultural and ideological values that socialism transforms and engenders" (109). Continuing his praise for Gómez's work, López elaborated on the aforementioned problematic in great detail, and because of the weight he gave to this aspect of the film, I will briefly review his words.

The problem of marginalization is one that, for López, has a huge weight in a neocolonial society such as Cuba. Marginalized groups are unique in that they have maintained strong traditions regardless of the cultural domination of Spain and the United States. Given the importance of these traditions for the identity of these groups, their traditions have become hardened over time and are particularly difficult to extricate. Thus, it is not surprising to find these traditional values still surviving within socialism, even if they are deemed unethical or reactionary. Machismo is one of such sets of values that can be found in Abakuá society, which contradicts the revolutionary belief in the equality of men and women. All of this underscores the necessity to investigate marginal groups in Cuba, but to do it without rejection or ideological antipathy *a la petit bourgeois* for those marginal people. Science, López argues echoing Althusser, must guide these approaches (109).

One Way or Another contributed to the goals of the Revolution by investigating and challenging the ethical values of marginalization. It did so, López states, by abandoning "traditional aesthetic values." He observes the way Gómez used the camera, showing the conviction, care, and intellectual rigor of a documentarian. According to López, "The movie was developed from a documental concept as it was required by the objectives of reflection and analysis" (111). He observes that the film consisted of elements of fiction, documentary footage, and real people playing themselves, producing a distanciation, and amplifying the analytical aspect of film.

López places a great deal of importance on the film's ability to "reproduce" reality, not in a mimetic sense, but more in line with what Mirta Aguirre suggested socialist realism should do. According to her, realism should account for the most important characteristics of reality, even if this means using aesthetic tropes and fictive devices.[49] Echoing Aguirre's concepts, Gómez used professional actors and fictional storylines to deepen her analysis of the community of Miraflores in La Havana. These tropes and aspects of fiction had to be shaped to make them authentic. With this in mind, López comments, Gómez's coaching the professional actors, which included the actors interacting with inhabitants of Miraflores, was exceptional in giving them the opportunity to be authentic in their roles. Authenticity was also the goal of Gómez's use of 16mm black and white film which she blew up to 35mm, according to Lopez, to give it the feeling of a documentary.[50] And finally, in using real people playing themselves

and real debates and situations, Gómez expressed a commitment to reality and to a realism sought out, not simply observed.

Gómez's tragic and early death from asthma required a tribute, and López wrote one. His words are clearly emotional and caring. Both belonged to the same community for roughly ten years and during those years they discussed and shared professional and political goals. He finishes as follows: "Sara, her life in ICAIC, her questions and polemics and her oeuvre are…a dialectic homage to the authenticity of [*One Way or Another* as an answer to the politicization of culture]."[51]

Althusser's influence on the Cuban cultural and political landscape helped establish a hermeneutic tradition that interpreted cultural works using Marxism and historical materialism. This hermeneutics was displayed publicly through the language of science. Such was the case with the official reception of *One Way or Another*. Marxist philosophy and science were used to review cultural work but they became also a representational technique. Though Cuban filmmakers were always trained first in documentary, and only later given the responsibility to produce works of fiction, the original impetus came from Italian neorealism and Marxist aesthetics (Brecht and others). That this impetus was born from the necessity to investigate Marxist aesthetics in film made the learning trajectory of the 1960s one of aesthetic exploration regarding the representational and tropical aspects of film. The results of this filmic pedagogy are evident in the work of Solás, who, in *Lucia*, uses an array of filmic techniques to narrativize different historical times. His work, influenced by neorealism, Mexican and

Hollywood melodrama, French new wave, and Lucino Visconti and Federico Fellini, is daringly postmodern.

The later introduction of Althusser to the theoretical, aesthetic, and political mix shifted the focus from a pedagogy of aesthetics to a pedagogy of Marxist science. Gómez is quite interesting in this sense because though she was roughly the same age as Solás, she was professionally trained by Gutiérrez and by the ten documentaries she directed. Solás directed *Manuela* and *Lucia* in 1968 while Gómez finished *One Way or Another* in 1974. Those years allowed for the development of a different approach to film, one more in accordance with the principles of science and less as an elaboration of aesthetics. This is not to say that Gómez's approach was not influenced by Gutiérrez, Brecht, Aguirre, Espinoza, and even Solás but rather to suggest that the options a filmmaker had during the 1970s regarding how to perform his/her job as a revolutionary vanguard were different and included the notion of science, the unicorn of Althusserian Marxism. This same cultural reality also served as a new parameter for reviewers, as just discussed.

Portrait of Teresa

While the release of *One Way or Another* came at a time when the issue of women's rights was part of the popular agenda, the reviewers saw it as a work dealing only marginally with the system of gender. This may be was the result of the sex of the reviewers, all of whom were men. These sexed official responses to the film

downplayed gender and instead saw it as a strong contribution to the issues of social marginalization and the use of documentary aesthetics in fictional film.

Gender and sex were arguably present throughout the film narratives though often these discursive paradigms and social realities were invocated only in a subtle fashion. Take for instance the following. In a scene Mario and Yolanda are conversing, and he is complaining about having told his fellow workers about the real reason Humberto had been absent from work. Previous to that, Humberto had claimed his mother's illness as the reason for his absence, but in reality he had spent those days with a woman. Mario was the only one who knew this, and he eventually uncovered Humberto's lie. Yolanda was giving Mario praise for having acted honorably, but Mario, instead of accepting her praise, bitterly comments that what he did was womanly. None of the reviewers used the opportunity given by the scene to talk about the constitution of masculinity and femininity that made Mario, Humberto, and Yolanda such realistic characters. Instead, the reviewers reduced this rich textuality to a succinct mention of the problems of machismo. But the word machismo in Cuba (as in other societies) is a term that has made a disservice to discussions of gender because it has been used to close off explorations about the nature of gender and sex. Once machismo is mentioned, the speaker seems to believe that everything has been said. The term patriarchy has had similar effects on some of North American feminisms. Both terms, patriarchy and machismo, when ill used, can nullify the possibility of understanding gender, sex, feminism, and the speaker as belonging to the same system. The terms also connote a

line between two clearly identifiable camps: old values versus new values, or patriarchy versus feminism, and sex inequality versus equality. When used to close off discussion, the terms become Manichean instead of structural descriptors of reality.

Portrait of Teresa, the successful 1979 film directed by Pastor Vega, dealt more centrally with issues of gender and sex, and official reviewers and the public saw it accordingly. But, before looking at the reviews and other commentaries on the film, it is important to mention briefly the social context of its reception. As noted in Chapter 3, during the 1970s Cuba underwent a process of institutionalization amidst a climate of cultural conservatism. Socialism was hailed as the goal of Cuba's socio-political development while communism was moved to the periphery. Only some relics (such as slogans) of the idealist past were left as reminders of the 1960s. The time for social experiments had ended in cultural and economic crisis. On a different front, new voices from the European academy were overpowering the ideas of old Marxisms like Sartre's and de Beauvoir's. Instead, the end of the 1960s and the 1970s saw the rise of Althusser, Jean-François Lyotard, Roland Barthes, and Foucault. These new voices, with their questioning of macro-narratives, freedom, and ideology gave some credibility to those Cubans justifying cultural state control (the Padilla case). Structural Marxism could better explain these Cubans' explanations of freedom and could also shed doubt on the critics' claim that "cultural repression" was clearly wrong. While structural Marxism supported discussions of cultural freedom, Althusser's Marxist science

became a viable way of evaluating cultural work. A tendency to use a normative hermeneutics to evaluate/interpret work continued.

During the mid 1970s, the "problem of women" became central to the public agenda. The FMC had proposed the Family Code in 1974, and it was made law in 1975. In addition to becoming official, the Family Code was debated across the nation in all the People's Organizations.[52] Though the Code included provisions regarding parenting, children born out of wedlock, and, quite importantly, divorce, the Code's regulation of life within the home was what caught the attention of people in general. These regulations were hotly debated since they meant that men would have to contribute equally in child-rearing and housework (102). The Family Code and the debates that it originated became key frameworks for the interpretation of *Portrait of Teresa*. The film tells the story of Teresa (Daisy Granados) and Ramón (Adolfo Llauradó), a married couple with three kids who are having conflicts due to the fact that Teresa is spending more time at work and becoming involved in the aficionado movement sponsored by the union (an after work activity). She needs more help from Ramón and asks for it.

Vega began his career at ICAIC in 1960. By 1979, he had directed thirteen documentaries and the fictional feature *De la Guerra Americana* (1969). As Galiano commented, in this work Vega attempted to paint a portrait of real life in Cuban society.[53] His commitment to reality was mediated also by science, which again speaks of the importance science had in interpreting reality during that decade. The link between script and science is in the following description by Vega:

> The film's theme came to be after reading a work produced by the Superior Institute of Brain Research about the emotional changes experienced by the adult population as a result of the transformations generated by the Revolution. This research suggested that the most typical problem found in most of the interviewed subjects were conflicts generated in couples as a result of the new possibilities that the Revolution offers to women (4).

The importance of these psychological issues, as described by the institute, led to the participation of the director of the institute Dr. José A. Bustamante, who assisted Ambrosio Fornet, the script writer, and Vega in the writing of the film and the drawing of the main characters. To bring realism to the roles, Granados and Llauradó were enrolled in the actual work that their characters performed. Granados became a worker in a textile factory; Llauradó worked as a technician in an electronics shop. The filming began without a full technical script, and actors were given the opportunity to improvise lines and acting details (4). Authenticity was the goal and Vega, like Gómez, believed that well prepared actors were those who had been immersed in the roles they played and that the director's responsibility was to let the actors improvise in front of the camera.

Portrait of Teresa opened on July 25, 1979, as a celebration of the anniversary of the 26th of July Movement. It was an unusually successful film in that it became a box office success, won international awards, and, more importantly for this research, elicited strong public reactions. These reactions were perceived as important enough to garner publicity in several media including *Granma* and the magazine *Bohemia*. In what follows I analyze the film's reception in terms of both official receptions and some printed audience reactions.

The official reception began to be shaped months before the movie was released. In February 1979, *Revolución y Cultura* had published a brief review where the film was described as having the objective to investigate the problems that women face.[54] In addition, *Granma* published an interview with Vega on July 26, 1979, and a formal review was published July 30. [55] Both review and interview were written by Galiano, the same reviewer who had commented on *One Way or Another*.

Galiano's review of the film centers on the issues of sex and gender inequality. He tries to convey the way society would speak to Teresa by recalling how the phrase "It's not the same" was repeated over and again by her husband Ramón, her cousin Charo, and her mother. Each of these characters represents different ways in which tradition tries to hold back Teresa from self-fulfillment at work. Each of these voices also represents different aspects of the system of gender and sex. The mother corresponds to the subjection that is accomplished via family morals and the bond of blood and flesh that exists between mothers and daughter. The mother's pressure is one that reaches backward in time to the moment of birth and promises the daughter fulfillment in repeating the schema. Teresa is at once both hailed by her mother and by her three offsprings. Ramón corresponds to the passing of tradition via the conduit of love, romance, and marriage and to the prohibition of breaking the conditions of love. Teresa is hailed as a subject here by her expectations of gender as performance of mother, bride, and wife and by all the desires she would fail to arouse if she does not listen.

According to Galiano, Teresa's refusal to respond to the pressures of tradition is an attempt to defend her right to "create" something. At work, Teresa's job consists of pushing yards and yards of fabric through the dulling machinery. She gains the opportunity to go beyond this routine by becoming involved in the Union's dance organization. At this, she is quite successful and becomes the leader of her troupe, a contender in the national competition of folkloric dance. In a move of Marxist idealism, Galiano associates self-fulfillment with artistic creation, at once vindicating the movement of aficionados so popular during the decade and after and the idea of the total self.

According to the educational paradigm of the time (formal and informal), the New Man needed to be more than perfect, she needed to be complete, and this completeness was the result of a multifaceted development that included work, art, physical education, and Marxist philosophy. Teresa was a compromise of sorts, for her character incorporated some of the aspects that would make her the New Man, except that she lived in a place where she could not become the New Man as a woman. "It is not enough, therefore, that women enjoy the same social rights that men do, or that men share the familial duties that before were her responsibility" (ibid.) These rights, at the time supported by Law in the Family Code, were only the beginning. "Absolute freedom can only be reached if both give each other the possibility to develop their individual personalities and to widen their horizons of existence, without subjection or dependencies" (ibid.). For Galiano, the possibility of becoming a more developed

individual, a better revolutionary, a whole self, a woman, was a possibility born out of subjective interdependence. A radical conclusion, the New Man is at once evoked as a symbol of the dream of self-fulfillment, only to be revealed as a community-offering for the future. Because of this interdependence, Teresa cannot be that which Ramón himself cannot be. His ways of embodying the past, which lead him to label all Teresa does as inappropriate and subject to contention, are weights that are pushing him and Teresa back in time, to a time that some of the reviewers call the Stone Age, and that all of the reviewers call traditional and pre-Revolutionary.

Sexual relations are also one of Galiano's concerns regarding the film. In *Portrait of Teresa,* Ramón, dissatisfied with what was happening at home, takes a lover, and later this comes into the open. The film ends with Ramón and Teresa meeting at a restaurant and talking about his affair. Teresa challenges Ramón by asking him what would he do if she also had an affair. "It is not the same" is the succinct answer. Galiano interprets this comment as signaling how outdated traditional sexual moral codes are. These codes exist to protect men's freedom and secure women's subjection and cannot be part of a revolutionary society (ibid.).

By mid-August the film was so successful that *Granma* printed another review. In it, Santiago Cardosa Arias points out that *Portrait* had been watched in two weeks by 250,000 people and "has awoken no few hot discussions, debates and controversies at homes, and workplaces…"[56] His review centers on the film's hot topic of the struggle between Teresa and Ramón. It differs from the previous ones in that it contrasts the

opinions of those who disagree with the film's pro-women line. Cardosa later dismisses these negative comments by calling Ramón a "caveman," thus aligning those who oppose the film with idiocy, the uneducated and violent past. Framing the film in terms of debate and struggle, Cardosa repeatedly uses the words conflict, fight, debate, denunciation, combat, and so on. In so doing, he suggests that the relationship of Teresa and Ramón is a conflict based on irreconcilable differences. Moreover, Teresa is the only one who is correct.

Talking about the film's conflict as a struggle in which only one of the parties was right became a common feature in later reviews. To justify these opinions reviewers talked about machismo, but Galiano and later Lourdes Prieto, reviewing for *Cine Cubano*, based their own opinions on the fact that the films had constructed a script that used science to demonstrate gender and sexual inequalities.[57] Prieto, in fact, goes into great detail explaining this relationship between script, acting, directing, and science.

Prieto's review begins by pointing out that *Portrait*'s success at the box office and in the streets was because the film communicated with the general Cuban public (127). An achievement of importance, the film's ability to communicate came from the fact that it reflected the daily life of many Cubans. How the film came to reflect the life of many Cubans speaks of a process of artistic creation and of official audience expectations regarding this process. Prieto dedicates most of her review to describing how the film's theme and its treatment of the theme came to be. She narrates the story of Gloria Maria Cossío, an ICAIC worker, finding a book entitled *Psychological Roots*

of Cubans, written by Bustamante. Prieto organized an interview with Bustamante where she learned the focus of his work: to explore the scientific reasons for the psychological problems of people facing rapid social changes, such as in the case of social revolutions (127). When Vega learned of Cossío's work, he became interested in these types of contradictions and their psychological dimensions. Vega visited Bustamante and his institute and began his searching through the institute's official files. In these files he learned that women were more susceptible to show emotional tensions in these social situations for two reasons: 1) More taboos are directed toward women's behavior, and these taboos conflict with the surrounding realities. 2) Additionally, women are constantly challenged by new responsibilities because they are part of a social environment where social demands for gender equality are always present. Their expectations change accordingly but not without heavy stress.

Based on these files, Prieto writes, Vega decided to construct the narrative around a woman. One file in particular influenced the direction that Vega took with the script. This case describes the marriage of a woman, X, who began to suffer from stress because of her husband's jealousy. He forced her to stay away from the militias (civil military organizations) and forbade her from working. When she was given an important position at a mass organization, the husband threatened to leave her if she took the job. The husband argued that she did not pay attention to children or home. In the end, X is abandoned. Prieto reports that the case of X gave Vega the basic plotline and character motivations of *Portrait*. Guided by machismo, a man tries to stop his

wife's participation in society; the same machismo is the root of the double-standard that shapes the actions of husband and wife.

For Prieto, as was the case in *One Way or Another*, a great deal of the success of *Portrait of Teresa* was due to the film's commitment to reality and to the fact that Vega used scientific knowledge as a starting point. Prieto also compliments the fact that a psychiatrist was part of the production staff and that actors Llauradó and Granados worked at jobs that their characters had in the film. In that way, the actors were able to write down complete biographies of the fictional characters and use that time to investigate their characters and those around them. As testament to Vega's commitment to realism, Prieto reported that some of the actors' experiences at their "real" jobs made it to the script.

Vega's approach to the making of the film, and the way it was narrativized by Prieto, speaks of the process of artistic creation in ways consistent with a scientific approach to aesthetics. Moreover, this "method" is what, according to Prieto, guaranteed *Portrait*'s success at communicating with the Cuban people. An artful narrative, it is implied, results from a commitment to reality and its examination through methods of science. It is necessary to remark that Vega's approach to the construction of the script is as relevant as Prieto's recognition of the importance of science and realism to the communicative intent of the film. That such a script could be generated in such a way fulfilled Prieto's expectations regarding representation. Instead of being produced by the subjective reactions to reality of the director and writer, the

film resulted from the objective examination of reality through science and Marxist philosophy.

Galiano and Prieto displayed their public personas and selves using key aspects of the revolutionary hermeneutics. Galiano interprets and evaluates the film in relation to its social and political potential. Pietro centers hers on issues of realism and science. They both use a political lexicon (e.g., rights, duties, equality, realism) and measure the diegetic world created by *Portrait* as one would measure an anthropological narrative. The realism is not questioned; it is basically assumed, almost as if they were following the old assumption imposed by Castro that form is irrelevant and that content is what should be policed.[58]

Portrait of Teresa's aesthetics shares with *One Way or Another* a reliance on scientific information to produce the narrative. They differ from each other in that the reviewers recognized Gómez's film as an attempt to educate using the power of dialectics, which is the power of Marxist philosophy and historiography (historical materialism). Moreover, these educational goals were made evident to viewers through the inclusion of documentary techniques and traditional ways of presenting knowledge with authority (such as using an adult male voice-over to present knowledge). Reality was made multidimensional via different types of fictional and nonfictional narratives; each type of narrative corresponded to a different dimension. The subjective and personal were presented in the fictionalized story. The historic and scientific were presented through documentary techniques.[59] Viewers had little difficulty understanding

the pedagogic goal of the film and in broadly understanding the educational techniques used by the film.

However, the realism reached by *Portrait of Teresa* was one embedded in the traditional genre of drama, and no documentary techniques were used. Also, no one in the film declared that they were presenting scientific knowledge, nor was the film preceded by titles explaining the scientific and clinical sources of the psychic struggles of the characters. The film's use of science was hidden from viewers, and only reviewers in-the-know were able to speak to that fact. Moreover, the technique for script development used by Vega and the actors, which included consultations with psychologists and an ethnographic approach to acting, improved the realism of the drama, but the film did not question drama as a genre. In fact, while *One Way or Another* is almost essayistic; *Portrait of Teresa* better fits Aguirre's description of socialist realism.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Aguirre believed that the best socialist art would use a realism that would dig into reality, recreate it, and perfect it.[60] In order to produce socialist realist art, one may use an array of artistic techniques and genres, but these uses should always be informed by Marxist philosophy and science. Moreover, form, tropes, and narrative techniques should be used to communicate with the audience; form, tropes, and narrative devices are not revolutionary in themselves, and they cannot guide the creator to produce revolutionary art. True useful art is an elaboration of

reality—not of artistic techniques. These insights are the type of aesthetics that guided Vega to the movie and the actors to their characters.

The meanings and interpretations of the film were only partly the result of *Portrait of Teresa*'s textual characteristics. The fact is, that because the film originated such strong debates for months after its release, its meanings and interpretations shifted over time. For instance, interviews with the director, actors, and scriptwriter and letters to the editor by viewers as well as interviews of viewers continued modifying the film's meaning and continued speaking about hermeneutics of self-formation. The film itself transformed the context of reception.

Interviews are very specific types of evidence in that they give the interviewees an opportunity to present information about themselves, their past, and their future in their own chosen way. For this reason, interviews function similarly to autobiographies. Of course, substantial differences also exist since an autobiography typically has different motivations. Some interviews allow the respondent time to narrativize her/his life; other interviews only request and/or print scant information. But in both cases, the interviewee is engaged in the construction and presentation of his/her self. The self has to be presented, on the one hand, in a way consistent across time and dimensions (by dimensions I mean what we would call economic life, spiritual life, political life, and so on). The self also, on the other hand, has to be presented consistent with the always contingent definition of the proper self held by the speaker and the definition of self held by the interviewer as is imagined by the interviewee. The intersection of these two

aspects of self-presentation hint to the speaker's subject position as this is constituted by her/his material and ideological realities. One final characteristic of interviews is worth mentioning. Interviews are always instrumental on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee. Institutional cultures and requirements at a general level typically framed questions and answers, and also framers are the persons and personas of the interviewer and interviewee. The same question asked by different people representing different institutions is likely to generate a different answer on the part of the interviewee, regardless of the principle of consistent self-presentation. In what follows I focus mostly on the interviews of Granados because these interviews offered me an opportunity to talk about self-presentation.

All the interviews with Granados brushed on roughly the same topics: her career, her opinions of Teresa, and her experiences during the filming of the film. In her answers I found clues as to the way she wanted to present herself, who she wanted to be, and how she wanted to be seen within the context of the interviews, the institutions that published them, and their readership. In two of the interviews Granados presented herself surrounded by her three kids (who also played her three sons in the film). On one of those occasions, the interview took place at her home foregrounding the normalcy of the actress. She was presented as a housewife, a mother of three (incidentally, Granados is married to Vega, the director of the film), and a cultural worker. On another occasion, she arrived to the interview with her three kids. Granados presents herself in this way to gain credibility as an actress by highlighting the

similarities between Teresa and herself and, in a sense, proving her qualifications as appropriate to play the character. Both women worked outside the home and had three children and a husband. Also, this technique of self-presentation allowed her to contain negative reactions towards Teresa by showing that what the film proposed had worked in her life.

In each of the interviews, Granados mentioned the way that she trained herself to play Teresa. She declared her ability to play the character as due to her working in the same textile factory, Ariguanabo, where the fictional Teresa worked. At the factory she performed the same job Teresa's character performed, and she had the chance to interview other women who worked there.[61] By interviewing these women, she learned of the challenges they faced as wives, mothers, and workers and incorporated this information into her character and into the script. In foregrounding the way she prepared herself, she declared herself aware of the requirements imposed on her as a member of the community of cultural workers. She showed that she knew that "the people," as Castro had requested almost two decades before, were a key source of learning for the vanguard. Moreover, she was also expected to reflect on her work as a cultural worker and on the lives of those workers whose lives she was trying to improve.

Her opinions about Teresa also give evidence to her awareness of how she needed to be seen by others. Since the film hailed Teresa as a revolutionary character, Granados had to align herself with Teresa's plights for justice and equality. Granados assured

Granma, "What Teresa does is not because of her stubbornness, like Ramón says, but because of her needs as a human being for self-realization."[62] She reminds the readers that it would have been more comfortable for Teresa to leave things unchanged, but that in order to become a revolutionary one must push for change, even if the process is arduous.[63]

In talking about the character Ramón, Granados declares politely that he "is a good man, struggling with himself." "He is," she even forwarded, "a revolutionary man," and yet still incapable of fully embracing the Revolution.[64] Llauradó, in a different interview, also was polite in stating that Ramón has evolved in some ways; after all, he says, Ramón lets Teresa work.[65] These gestures, on behalf of Ramón, by both actors seem to signal the need to avoid as much as possible alienating the (mostly male) viewers who had been vocally and forcefully complaining about the wisdom of the film's gender and sexual proposals.

In reflecting on the many debates that the film originated among the audience, some of which ended in altercations and fistfights, *Bohemia* published a piece in which Enrique Valdéz Pérez and Manuel López Alistoy interviewed the workers of the factory Ariguanabo, the same factory where Granados and Teresa worked. The debate and differences of opinions among this group of workers was quite intense and, based on the points of view published in the article, it would seem that most men disagreed with Teresa's claims while most (but not all) women agreed with her. A point of particular relevance in the discussions was the double standard regarding, on the one hand, the

infidelity of Ramón and, on the other, Teresa fraternizing with her coworker Tomás. The men, simply speaking, interpreted Teresa's friendship with Tomás as infidelity, though Teresa never was sexually involved with Tomás. The women saw the friendship between the two characters as innocent and Ramón's reactions as irrational and unfair.

Finally, two letters to the editor published in *Granma* during August of the same year shed some light on this topic.[66] The first letter criticized the film's way of trying to address machismo. The second letter was a response to the first one. In both cases, *Granma* foregrounded the respective authorities of the writers by printing their education and professional affiliation as sub-heads to the letters. Dr. Elsa Gutiérrez Baró, the director of the Clinic for Adolescence and the president of the Cuban Society of Psychiatry, wrote the first letter. Gutiérrez interpreted the film's theme in terms of the fights against sexual inequality. She believed the film badly framed the issues of equality, as the film assumes possible equality, yet, in her opinion, the physiologic fact that women can procreate precludes talking about equality. Gutiérrez, in trying to prove her points, argues that the problematic of the film is partly the result of Teresa's ineptitude as a wife and mother. As a wife, she lacks the ability to administer her time and commitments. As a mother, she has failed to raise her children correctly. For example, she points out that Teresa's kids drink from the bottle at the ages of four and six. Also, she observes that Teresa dresses the oldest boy as if the "boy were an invalid."[67] Gutiérrez argues that those children are on their way to becoming machos. Finally, in a drastic rewriting of the plotline, Gutiérrez suggests that Teresa's

complaints are basically sexual and had to do with whether she should have the right to cheat on her husband. Her opinion on this matter is, of course, that the Family Code forbids her from doing such a thing.

Professor Magaly Ramos Vera, affiliated with the Pedagogical Institute of Technical and Professional Education, responds to Gutiérrez. Ramos defends Teresa by pointing out that she is a very normal mother, one who has to take care of her kids, alongside her work duties and other household duties.[68] Given this, and as is common, Teresa has been forced to be permissive with her children in some aspects, such as the bottle issue. Ramos emphatically makes her point by calling Teresa, and all women like her, heroes who have managed to care for and educate their children while contributing to a nation that needed their work. She also points out that the movie does not center around the question of whether Teresa should have the right to commit adultery but, rather, that the issue is the existence of a double standard that forgives men who commit adultery and viciously attacks women who do the same.

What the letters and the interviews with audiences show is a society deeply divided on the issues of gender and sex (in)equality. They also show how definitions of femininity and masculinity were becoming partly redefined by the idea of the New Man or the ideal revolutionary citizen. These definitions were not equally important to everybody and their impacts were also unequal. The evidence also shows the ways the community of cultural workers more uniformly embraced these ideals as part of their vanguard position. All of the reviews and commentaries by cultural workers sided with

the film's gender and sex proposals, no doubt partly because embracing gender and sex equality in public was a way of properly defining their public selves.

Up to a Certain Point

The private selves of the vanguard were a different matter altogether, and that is precisely the topic of the last film analyzed in this chapter. *Up to a Certain Point* is a film that deals with gender and sex inequality in the context of the production of culture. Directed by Gutiérrez in 1983, the film tells the story of a film director and a scriptwriter who, in the process of filming a documentary about sex equality among dock-workers, meets an extraordinary woman worker. Her personality and revolutionary spirit are such that she is chosen to occupy the central place in the documentary narrative. Because of this, Oscar, the scriptwriter has to research her life and comes so close to her that they began having an affair. He is married. The plot deals partly with a type of double-speak. The scriptwriter is criticizing and documenting sexist attitudes among workers, yet he fails to pass the test of equality himself.

Angel Rivero, reviewing for *Revolución y Cultura*, interpreted the film as attempting to problematize the relationship between the *conciencia* of intellectuals and that of the workers.[69] As in previous work by Gutiérrez, the narrative uses documentary footage intermixed with the fictional narrative. Rivero barely mentions this technical and aesthetic aspect of the film. In fact, that the worker's *conciencia* is shown mostly through real interviews with real dock-workers is not mentioned. Instead, Rivero is

more interested in the romantic and fictional storyline between Oscar and Lina, the female worker. As has been true in all the films so far reviewed, it is the female character who most fully embodies the characteristics of the New Man. Lina is, Rivero tells us, a hard worker, intelligent, honest, and with a strong sense of self. The director's character is barely mentioned. He is of interest to Rivero only insofar as he is able to elicit certain behavior from Lina.

A lengthier and more nuanced review of the film was published in *Cine Cubano*.[70] Enrique Colina, another regular among the reviewers, quickly points out that Lina becomes central to the work of the fictional director and scriptwriter, for she embodies the ideal of sexual equality. She is a leader in a job typically reserved for men. Colina, like Rivero, is more interested in writing about the romantic relationship than the aesthetics of the film which he does explore. He proposes that the intention of the film is to show the viewer how unwise it is to try to possess that which one loves. That the male character does the possessing is not mentioned. Also disregarding the film's criticism of machismo, Colina proposes that Gutiérrez "introduces his movie in the knowledge that we are in a universe with imperfection" (89). Colina does see the film as social criticism, but not of machismo per se. The film, he argues, criticizes the negligent attitude of those who place demands on others but not on themselves. Perhaps because the culture of the vanguard had grown old, this candid reflection on intellectual complacency seemed a proper way of communicating to a viewership then accustomed to criticizing such double-speak.

That said, Colina does criticize the way the film represents intellectuals as too schematic and Manicheist, though he appreciates the fact that Gutiérrez was continuing to investigate the moral formation of intellectuals, particularly the way intellectuals become subjects to their own ethical norms. As the reader may remember, Gutiérrez had explored a similar topic in the film with which I opened this chapter, *Memories*. In that film, the protagonist, Sergio, criticizes with an educated eye his surroundings and uses Western-centric ideas to separate himself from the Cuban people and the Revolution. His ethics, taste, and knowledge place him in a location from which he can only melancholically observe life passing.

Conclusion

The practice of criticism in Cuba after the revolution has been a social site where cultural critics could and have performed normative ideas of public selfhood. Typically working under the umbrella of cultural institutions linked, at least ideologically, to the ruling PCC, cultural criticism was fundamental to the creation of a field of cultural production distinctive to a revolutionary society—and different from what existed before 1959. Like in capitalist societies, cultural critics in Cuba acted as gatekeepers of the field, but, in addition, criticism was a way of policing the cultural field. This policing was carried out by judging cultural works in relationship to a revolutionary hermeneutics that attempted to fuse the cultural to the political: films, as the rest of the arts, were used for governance and were understood in terms of governmentality. This

meant that a revolutionary hermeneutics would answer, at the social level, to questions on how to govern the people and how to make them proper subjects of the Revolution. At the individual level, and particularly among cultural workers, this meant that cultural practices, including film criticism, would have to address the issue of how to become a member of the vanguard or how to become a proper social leader and thus a revolutionary individual.

The reviews and cultural workers analyzed above shed light on the issue of how practices of cultural criticism fit the social goals of governance and the personal goals of governmentality. As practices, each review consistently applied some of the principles of the revolutionary hermeneutics that I have argued have existed in Cuba since 1959. The consistency of their application signals several things that I must mention. The cultural field and those who worked in it followed normative ideas about interpretation and evaluation; since these ideas were coherent with cultural policy, and cultural policy brokered between the cultural field and the field of power, I can infer that interpretation and evaluation were tasks that also mediated the cultural worker's relation to the cultural field *and* to the field of power. The consistency with which the revolutionary hermeneutics were applied also tells me that the debates I have mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, or at least some aspects of them, were public and relevant to cultural workers (though without further biographical evidence I cannot make inferences regarding the way the workers learned of these debates). The revolutionary hermeneutic functioned as a *techne* of interpretation and aesthetic evaluation; given that

the interpretations were publicly displayed and linked to broader political and social goals, I can infer that hermeneutics was a *techne* used by cultural workers in order to craft a proper public identity and self. Serving as the standard against which a public identity and self would be measured, the New Man provided a symbolic *telos* that helped structure a paradigm of the permissible and the desirable that workers used to give meaning to present actions and to select among possible futures.

That normative ideas guided the ways in which cultural workers crafted public identities and selves is evidence of the political, social, and cultural power of the revolutionary government. However, it has been my argument that such things cannot be understood simply as subjection or compliance to the rules imposed on cultural workers; rather, I argue, such practices must be seen also as part of the reshaping of the realm of freedom and individuality that the Revolution engendered. Because of the recognition that pre-revolutionary ways of being, including old ideas about freedom, were shaped by oppression, a radical transformation of the idea of freedom was required to become a truly decolonized nation. Practices of freedom, which is what Foucault calls practices associated with technologies of self, were normalized and then guided the actions of those interested in becoming a members of the vanguard.

Foucault suggests that technologies of self are embedded in disciplines and that these disciplines consist of or rely on organized systems of knowledge. Aside from the fact that interpretation was disciplined, as is evidenced in the consistent application of an interpretive *techne*, the systems of ideas used in Cuba to view culture as political, as

cultural forms holding pedagogic potential, are also examples of disciplining. The importance of aesthetics and the centrality of scientific (or at least pseudo-scientific) knowledge to guide cultural actions is evidence of a disciplinary approach to culture that marked the communities of cultural workers. Performing their cultural jobs in accordance to the aesthetic principles of the Revolution or using science to craft culture were ways of presenting a proper social self, one that could occupy a position within a cultural institution, and one that could be considered in the process of developing *conciencia*.

In conclusion, and in regard to the question driving these investigations, there is little doubt that Cuban cultural workers exercised their craft within the parameters of a technology of public selfhood. They attempted to transform their public selves in the image of the New Man. They used their labor as evidence of this transformation. They created specific knowledges and techniques to carry out their jobs in ways that could facilitate the development of *conciencia*. They embraced the *telos* of the New Man and attempted to become this *telos* through the exercise of practices of freedom.

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[1] Julio García Espinosa, "La Crítica y el Público," *Cine Cubano* 1, no. 3 (n.d.): 12-13.

[2] Alfredo Guevara, "La Cultural y la Revolución," *Cine Cubano* 1, no. 4 (n.d.): 45-47.

[3] For more on the institutionalization of criticism, see David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 19-42.

[4] To read about the way criticism was used for political purposes, see Georgina Dopico Black, "The Limits of Expression: Intellectual Freedom in Postrevolutionary Cuba," *Cuban Studies* 19 (1989): 107-42. See also Roger Reed, *The Cultural Revolution in Cuba* (Geneva, Switzerland: Latin American Round Table, 1991).

[5] Remembering the importance Pierre Bourdieu gives to position taking, one may say that critics in Cuba were not unusual nor were their roles and dispositions. Criticism has always lauded or ostracized, prized or punished. See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 61-73.

[6] A good example of the tendency to ask this question is found in the issue of *Casa de las Américas* that celebrated the Revolution's tenth anniversary. The issue included interviews with dozens of intellectuals, writers, and artist including Juan Marinello, Alejo Carpentier, Mirta Aguirre, Cintio Vitier, Edmundo Desnoes, Miguel Barnet, Belkis Cuza Malé, to new a few. These cultural workers were asked four questions: 1) Which cultural form has best expressed the Revolution? 2) Is

your literary production linked to the Revolution? 3) What pre-revolutionary literary tradition remains valid? 4) What fundamental change in relation to the Revolution have you experienced between 1959 and today? "Literatura y Revolución (Encuestas): Los Autores," *Casa de las Américas* 9, no. 151-152 (November-February 1968-1969): 119-74.

[7] Individuals use self-definition to bring coherence to the present and to the past from the present. History and autobiography are two narrative genres that have been used to produce self-definitions.

[8] This last point is particularly clear in films that include their narrative audience's responses to the issues discussed in the film. Sara Gómez in *One Way or Another* includes interviews with people commenting on the anti-revolutionary behavior of one of the characters; Gutiérrez includes in *Up to a Point* interviews with men and women talking about women's work, and so on.

[9] Paulo Antonio Paranaguá, "Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (1928-1996) Tensión y reconciliación," *Encuentro de la Cultural Cubana*, no. 1 (Summer 1996): 77-89.

[10] John Downing, "Four Films of Tomás Gutiérrez Alea," in *Film & Politics in the Third World*, ed. John Downing (New York: Praeger, 1987), 279-301; Chapter 11 of Michael Chanan, *The Cuban Image : Cinema and Cultural Politics in Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

[11] Bernardo Callejas, "*La Muerte de un Burócrata*," *Granma* [Havana], July 28, 1966. See also Desiderio Navarro, "*La Muerte de un Burócrata*," *Adelante* [Camagüey], August 23, 1966 (n.p.).

[12] "Ellos Habrían Sido Como Nosotros," *Unión, Revista de la Unión de Escritors, Artistas de Cuba* 6, no. 4 (December 1968): 236-37.

[13] See for instance Elena Díaz, "*Memorias del Subdesarrollo*," *Cine Cubano* 9, nos. 52-53 (January-February 1970): 79-84. See also Nicolas Cossio, "TGA Desarrolla el Subdesarrollo," *Bohemia* 60, no. 35 (August 30, 1968): 74-75.

[14] Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, "*Memorias del Subdesarrollo*: Notas de Trabajo," *Cine Cubano* 7, nos. 45-46 (August-October 1967): 20.

[15] See Chapter 4's section on aesthetics.

[16] "*Memorias del Subdesarrollo*: Film Cubano/ con Sergio Corrieri y Daisy Granados / Foto Ramón F. Suárez / Dir. Tomás G. Alea," *Cine Cubano* 8, nos. 49-51 (August-December 1968): 152-55.

[17] Cossio, "TGA Desarrolla el Subdesarrollo."

[18] Compare this to discussions of freedom in Chapter 7.

[19] Díaz, "*Memorias del Subdesarrollo*," 79-84.

[20] "Cartelera," *Granma*, October 12, 1968 (n.p.).

[21] Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 206.

[22] *Mujeres* 8, no. 3, 1968.

[23] Roberto Meyer, "*Lucía*: Fastos Cubanos," *Cine Cubano* 10, nos. 63-65 (July-December 1970): 156. See also "Al Pie de la Letra," *Casa de las Américas* 10, no. 57 (November-December 1969): 142.

[24] For a lengthier discussion on auteurs, see Chapter 7.

[25] Daniel Díaz, "'*Lucía'* (I)," *Granma* [Havana] October 15, 1968, Cultural Section (n.p.).

[26] Meyer, "*Lucía*: Fastos Cubanos," 157.

[27] Camila Henriquez Ureña, "*Lucía*, 1895," *Cine Cubano* 9, nos. 52-53 (January-February 1969): 6.

[28] Meyer, "*Lucía*," 156.

[29] Henriquez, "*Lucía*, 1895."

[30] Meyer writes: "Restless spinster, asphyxiated by the family and bourgeois environment of fin de sicle, she gives herself to her boyfriend knowing that he is a snitch for the Spanish…". Meyer, "*Lucía*," 157.

[31] Renee Méndez Capote, "*Lucía*, 1932," *Cine Cubano* 9, nos. 52-53 (January-February 1969): 8-12.

[32] Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): 39-40.

[33] Méndez, "*Lucía*, 1932," 9.

[34] Graziella Pogolotti, "Lucía 196…," *Cine Cubano* 9, nos. 52-53 (January-February 1969): 13-17.

[35] In their concern for the way film aesthetics comments on ethic and political issues, Meyer, Cossio, and Díaz resemble the style of Stanley Kauffmann. See chap. 6 and 7.

[36] "El Cine las Decidió." *Mujeres* [Havana] (1974): 46-47.

[37] For more on the issue, see Chapter 3. To learn more about women's lives in Cuba, look at the important strand of feminist scholarship that has used interviews and personal narratives to represent/learn about Cuban women. In particular, see Margaret Randall, *Cuban Women Now: Interviews with Cuban Women* (Toronto, Canada: Women's Press Publications, 1974); Inger Holt-Seeland, *Women of Cuba* (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & CO., Inc., 1982).

[38] Gómez in Chanan, *The Cuban Image*, 252.

[39] See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the State" [1970], in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press,

1971), 171,75. See also Louis Althusser. “Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon” [1968], in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.

[40] See Chapter 3.

[41] Carlos Galiano, “*De Cierta Manera*,” *Granma* [Havana], October 22, 1977: 5.

[42] Gerardo Chijona, “*De Cierta Manera*,” *Cine Cubano*, no. 93 (n.d.): 103-05.

[43] I know of a U.S. researcher whose methodologies were ethnographic and who in order to gain credibility with a Cuban ministry had to perform some quantitative work and insist to Cuban authorities that such work *was* the research.

[44] Galiano, “*De Cierta Manera*,” 5.

[45] Chijona, “*De Cierta Manera*,” 105.

[46] Louis Althusser, “A letter on Art to André Daspre” [1966], in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 222.

[47] Chijona, “*De Cierta Manera*,” 105.

[48] Rigoberto López, "*De Cierta Manera*," *Cine Cubano*, no. 93 (n.d.): 106-15.

[49] See Chapter 4.

[50] John Downing points out that Gómez blew up the film to 35 mm so that it could be shown in theaters. John Downing, Email to Hector Amaya, July 29, 2003.

[51] López, "*De Cierta Manera*," 115.

[52] Holt-Seeland, *Women of Cuba*, 102.

[53] Carlos Galiano, "*Retrato de Teresa*: 'Hacer por Medio de la Ficción, un Reportaje de la Vida Actual en Nuestra Sociedad,'" *Granma* [Havana], July 26, 1979: 4.

[54] A. R., "*Retrato de Teresa*," *Revolución y Cultura* [Havana] 78 (February 1979): 83-84.

[55] Carlos Galiano, "*Retrato de Teresa*," *Granma* [Havana], July 30, 1979 (n.p.).

[56] Santiago Cardosa Arias, "'Retrato.,' Retrata," *Granma* [Havana], August 11, 1979: 4. By the end of its run, one out of every four Cubans had seen the film. Patricia Peyton and Carlos Broullon, "*Portrait of Teresa*: An Interview with Pastor Vega and Daisy Granados," *Cineaste* 10, no. 1 (1979/1980): 24-25+.

[57] Lourdes Prieto, "*Retrato de Teresa* de la Realidad a la Ficción," *Cine Cubano,* no. 98 (1980) (n.p.).

[58] See the section on "Palabras" in Chapter 3.

[59] I am not suggesting the viewers had a clear idea of all the devices Gómez used in her film. In fact, I believe most viewers were never aware that some of the characters in the fictional narrative were playing themselves, were real people.

[60] Mirta Aguirre, "Apuntes Sobre la Literatura y el Arte," in *Pensamiento y Política Cultural Cubanos: Tomo II*, ed. Nuria Nuiry Sánchez and Graciela Fernández Mayo (Havana, Cuba: Editorial Pueblo Educación, 1987 [1980]), 108.

[61] "Una Visita en Compañia de Ramón a Teresa, Detras del Retrato," *Granma* [Havana], August 1979 (n.p.) Also Senel Paz, "Teresa en Dos Tiempos," *Bohemia* 71, no. 34 (August 24, 1979): 27.

[62] "Una Visita en Compañia de Ramón a Teresa, Detras del Retrato," n.p.

[63] Paz, "Teresa en Dos Tiempos," 27.

[64] Alejandro González Acosta, "Con Teresa, Punto y Seguido," *Cine Cubano,* no. 98 (1980): 115.

[65] Carlos Galiano, "Adolfo Llauradó, o el Retrato de un Actor," *Granma* [Havana], August 8, 1979: 4.

[66] Elsa Gutiérrez, “Asunto: Teresa,” *Granma* [Havana], August 15, 1979, 2; Magaly Ramos Vera, “Teresa: Otra Carta,” *Granma* [Havana], August 20, 1979, 2.

[67] Gutiérrez, “Asunto,” 2.

[68] Ramos, “Teresa,” 2.

[69] Ángel Rivero, “Una Utopía Hecha Realidad: V Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano,” *Revolución y Cultura*, no. 3 (March 1984): 34-37.

[70] Enrique Colina, “*Hasta Cierto Punto*,” *Cine Cubano*, no. 108 (1984): 88-90.

6

The U.S. Field of Culture: Feminism and Leftism

In 1973, the year that the first post-revolutionary Cuban films were distributed and exhibited in the United States, *Newsweek* magazine published a small piece in which Arthur Cooper commented on the film critic as superstar.[1] Cooper was not referring to Jean-Luc Goddard or François Truffaut, who had been film critics and were, no doubt, some sort of superstars. Cooper was referring to a group of critics that in the United States were establishing the then influential practice of popular film criticism in newspapers and magazines. Critics like Vincent Canby (*The New York Times*), Pauline Kael (*New Yorker*), Judith Crist (*TV Guide*, *New York*), Stanley Kauffmann (*The New Republic*), Andrew Sarris (*Village Voice*), and John Simon (*Esquire*) had given the practice an aura of respectability that before 1960 was less impressive.[2] To Cooper, these critics were superstars because at that time their opinions were respected, influential, and, as importantly, their opinions reflected a great deal of knowledge about cinema. As practitioners of popular film criticism, these critics professionalized the field, making it into a field of specialists (218).

But during the 1970s, these superstars were not the sole commentators on culture or their publications the only sources of film criticism. Specialized magazines like *Variety* and journals like *Film Quarterly* existed to provide different types of reviews and interpretation, and other political journals like *Jump Cut* and *Cineaste* and

magazines like *Ms.* were catering to an increasingly politically varied, ideologically fragmented, and knowledgeable readership. Critics, like media and readers, varied in their political and ideological stances and existed in a diverse American field of cultural production. However, variations among critics were not only a matter of individual taste or expression of a distinctive genius, like *Newsweek* seemed to suggest.[3] It is reasonable to think that critics, superstars or not, performed their jobs in ways that gave expression to social and historical dispositions to view film (and perhaps also the world) in specific ways, with specific interpretive and meaning-making frameworks. For instance, Kauffmann, one of the superstars to whom *Newsweek* referred in 1973, participated, as a critic, in the public protest against the American government for stopping the First Cuban Film Festival in New York in 1972. With other notables, including Kael and Sarris, the other superstars, he sent a harsh protest letter to *The New York Times* in 1972. In 1973, when *Memories of Underdevelopment* (*Memories* from here on) was finally distributed, he reviewed it for *The New Republic*, his traditional journal. Placed right after a review, also written by him, of a book that criticized the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the cases of censorship and repression sponsored by that organization, *Memories'*s review begins with a paragraph in which Kauffmann mentions the censoring and repression of the Cuban Film Festival in New York by the State Department.[4] In these writings, this professional critic takes direct action in order to participate in a cultural struggle with clear political meanings. Though

his participation is one of pro-freedom of expression and anti-censorship (not pro-Cuba), his political expectations framed his evaluation of *Memories*.

Kauffmann's review of *Memories* is interested in the film not only for its textual characteristics but also for the place the film occupied within the U.S. field of cultural production and the field of power. *Memories* had spilled over whatever boundaries had existed to separate politics from culture and had confirmed, yet again, the way the U.S. government exercised governance through the control and the shaping of the cultural world. That Kauffmann recognized this style of governance as one similar to the one used during the McCarthy years is hardly surprising and, simultaneously, deeply significant. Like other intellectuals of the time, Kauffmann understood that the fear of communism underscored the reaction against Cuban film by the U.S. government during the 1970s, and this fear brought with it an interference with the civil liberties of Americans.[5]

If Kauffman's review is significant because it is inscribed within a political struggle against the U.S. government Cold War apparatus, it becomes doubly important to American film reception when such a political act is carried on through the interpretation of, and commentary on, a Cuban film. His actions were hermeneutic and entangled in a web of issues that included professional and political expectations about Cuban films. In this chapter I look closely at the field of cultural production surrounding the reception of Cuban film in the 1970s and 1980s in order to understand

the array of interpretive frameworks and expectations likely available to politicized reviewers of these films.

Because these films were from Cuba, I theorize that modes of reception were likely influenced by at least three factors. 1) Ideological factors that could have affected perception of any cultural product coming from Cuba. Thus, I comment on the way that Americans perceived the Cuban Revolution and the way this revolt influenced the American political left during the early 1960s. Such influence is partly explained by looking at racial and gender expectations common in the United States regarding Latin Americans and Latin American societies. 2) Institutional factors that had to do with the particular place these films occupied in the field of culture. Thus, I review the politicization of popular culture of the 1960s as well as the popularization of foreign film exhibition and film festivals that began in the 1950s. These factors are an important part of the institutional stage that Cuban films would later occupy. 3) Epistemological and aesthetic factors that likely influenced the reception of this set of politicized films. For that, I look at changes in the academy due to the multiplication of "subjugated knowledges" and argue that the transformation of university education due to the epistemological and hermeneutic propositions of the counter-hegemony heavily influenced film criticism. This transformation provided general hermeneutic parameters used within feminist and leftist criticism. Each of these sections offers layers of significations that likely came to bear in the actual reception of Cuban films which will be analyzed in the following chapter.

The Libretto: Ideological Dispositions

In May 17, 1957, CBS aired a Special Report by Robert Taber called "Rebels of the Sierra Maestra: The Story of Cuba's Jungle Fighters." In an old journalistic tradition (the journalist-as-explorer), Taber had gone to Cuba to search and find a mysterious rebel fighter, and he had succeeded. He tells his viewers that he was in the Sierra "not to explore the maze of Cuban politics, but to find a man the government says isn't there, the Rebel Leader Fidel Castro."[6] The footage of the rebels reveals a group of young men and women, including three young Americans, sharing cigars, food, and otherwise acting as if they were in a scout camp in the middle of the jungle. The documentary follows Taber's crew through the Sierra to finally find the rebel group described as "clerks, technicians, students, townspeople, and simple campesinos." They are led by "Doctor Fidel Castro, thirty-one, holder of four university degrees." The three American boys, who had gone from Guantanamo Bay to join the Rebels, are particularly interesting to Taber, and he asks all of them the reason for their dangerous odyssey. Chuck Ryan, who at twenty-one is the oldest of the three, answers: "Well, we came to do our part for the freedom of the world. We just heard so much about how, uh, about how Batista was so cruel…" Then he pleas to the parents of the other two (one of whom is only fifteen): "They should be proud of their sons…I only hope that they can try to realize what their boys are doing. Their boys are fighting for an ideal…for their country and the world. This is for world peace" (84). From the jungles of the Sierra Maestra, CBS viewers were witnessing something unusual: the power of a mysterious and

charismatic young man, Castro, to capture the imagination of young Americans to the point of securing their greatest support and solidarity.

Though CBS's Special Report was the first television piece dedicated to the 26th of July Movement in Cuba, the rebel movement had been of interest to media during the previous couple of years and, increasingly, during the previous couple of months.[7] The *New York Times* had published extensive pieces written by Herbert Matthews in February 1957 and the *Chicago Tribune, Time,* and *Life* magazine had followed with written and photo essays in the months that followed.[8] The appeal of Castro and the way these reports framed the movement created an aura of idealism, manliness, and courage that surrounded the Cuban revolutionaries until the end of the decade. Among the youth, Castro's persona strengthened this aura, an image which was easy to incorporate into personal fantasies of courage, individuality, and sacrifice that had been fed by popular culture (53). The rise of rock 'n' roll, the 1955-1956 films *Rebel Without a Cause, The Wild One,* and *Blackboard Jungle,* and books like Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* provided young men with a catalog of attractive options regarding masculinity that could set them apart from previous generations and that could bring meaning to what some feared was an overly stifling epoch. That Castro was routinely described as a mixture of Robin Hood, George Washington, and Gregory Peck and that Carleton Beals, writing for *The Nation*, tried to discredit Castro by writing a piece titled "Rebels Without a Cause" helped consolidate the link between some American youth and the revolutionaries (55).

Not surprisingly, much in the same way that idealist young Americans had joined the Spanish revolution a couple of decades before, restless members of a new generation of Americans tried to join the Cuban revolution, and some succeeded. Of those who did not, many joined the effort symbolically by organizing pro-revolutionary activities meant to support the Revolution financially and politically. The 1960s began, indeed, not only in Greensboro, North Carolina, but also in these organizations, one of which, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC), gave an opportunity to create alliances across races,[9] across campuses like Berkeley, California, and Madison, Wisconsin, and gave the opportunity to a new group of student and political leaders from different ideological credos to taste political battle against the establishment (162).

The sex appeal of the Cuban Revolution dwindled after 1960 and what was left of its popular force was lost during the Missile Crisis, at least for a few years. Although most of the New Left ceased publicly to support the Revolution, radical groups, including the Weathermen, at the end of the 1960s retook Cuban imagery in the forging of their own mythologies. In culture, several plays dealing with Cuba appeared also at the end of the 1960s. *Cuba, Sí* (1968), written by Terence McNally, was about a New York women named Cuba who supported the revolution and gave pro-Castro speeches in Central Park.[10] The same year, Jack Gelber (who does a cameo in *Memories of Underdevelopment*) staged *The Cuban Thing*, which presented the gains that the Cuban revolution had brought to a middle-class family. The Cuban American press and the

Cuban American community opposed the play so fiercely that the theater was bombed the day of the preview. The play closed after one day (330).

Because of the strong presence of the Cuban exile community in American culture and politics, the fact that Cuba is communist (rather than a government of any other politics), and the United States had always desired to influence Cuban affairs, the island has been a catalyst for political emotion. On the one hand, for good or for bad, Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara became symbols of Third World revolutionary struggles. I use the word symbol in a literal sense. Castro and Che are more symbols than they are persons, and these symbols have been constructed through mostly sketchy knowledge and mythical narrations. On the other hand, the nation of Cuba, the whole ten million of its people, culture and history, has been presented to Americans since 1960 through the eyes of the Cold War. Cuba's "imagined" politics have eclipsed almost any other reality that may had been used to understand the island. Because of this politics, Cuba has been a heroic nation to many in the Left, or a rogue state to most Americans. As such, Cuba was systematically lumped with the Soviet nations and defined as a military communist dictatorship.

By the beginning of the 1970s, the animosity between the two nations had become a strange tradition, particularly in light of what the U.S. government was doing regarding other socialist and communist nations. For instance, in 1971, Richard Nixon ended the twenty-one-year trade embargo with China. This was part of Nixon's and his advisor Henry Kissinger's strategy of pressuring the Soviets to forget about Hanoi.[11]

The following year, 1972, Nixon made the historic trip to visit Mao Tse-tung at Peking to tighten a relationship that could make the world a better place. The same day of the momentous gala evening presided over by Chairman Mao acting as host to the U.S. President and his wife, the U.S. State Department denied visas to the, by then internationally acclaimed, Cuban directors who were to participate in the First Cuban Film Festival. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright questioned why the "US government should consider four filmmakers a security threat and not Mao Tse-tung and the People's Republic of China."[12] Other senators also protested, including Edward Kennedy and George McGovern. *The New York Post* and *Los Angeles Times* also questioned this act.

Michael Myerson, a key organizer of the film festival, suggested that the U.S. government's treatment of the Cuban directors was unlawful, and that the eventual halt of the film festival was linked to a group of Cuban exiles, all of whom had participated in the CIA-organized Bay of Pigs invasion and were "serving" the Nixon administration (1-3).[13] Myerson's strong evidence was the presence of other anti-Castro associations in the Nixon administration: four of the five men arrested in June 17, 1972, at the Watergate Hotel, were Cuban-Americans who had been linked to the CIA and to the Bay of Pigs affair.

Besides their potential relation to Nixon's government, conservative Cuban-Americans played another important role in making the First Cuban Film Festival a politically laden event. Similar to the violence directed toward Gelber's play in 1968,

radical Cuban-Americans organized protests in front of the Olympia theatre (which was to host the event), stoned the theater, and threatened to bomb it (32). Though the festival opened March 24, 1972, the pressures to impede its continuation were too great, and the U.S. State and Treasury Department stopped the festival March 25, seized the prize-winning film *Days of Water* (1971), and committed an old-fashioned act of cultural repression.

The critics protested. Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* and Jay Cocks of *Time* wrote to complain about the government's halting of the festival, and, as I mentioned, a group of film critics published a letter "To the Editors" in *The New York Review of Books* also protesting. This last letter poignantly stated: "We think it either sinister or absurd when access to foreign art can be turned off and on like a tap to suit the government's current policy, when Americans are not allowed to see Cuban films only weeks after the President has been televised worldwide cheerfully applauding the Peking Ballet…The blockade of Cuba by the United States has been a foolish and destructive mistake."[14] The signers were Amos Vogel, Sarris, Annette Michelson, Dwight MacDonald, Gelber, Cocks, Jonas Mekas, Nat Hentoff, Richard Gilman, Ricki Franklin, Kauffmann, Stephen Koch, and William Wolf. Several of the signers would be reviewers of the Cuban films I am investigating.

Yet politics regarding Cuba had also been determined by the way Cuba has been constructed in the minds of Americans as a Third World nation, a Latin American nation, and a non-white nation not only by news but also by mass culture, chiefly film.

If Castro could so readily occupy a place in the pantheon of rebels without a cause, the youth hero of the 1950s, and later, become a "classical" dictator, it was partly because of a tradition of seeing Latin Americans since Pancho Villa—and, closer in time of Castro, Augusto Cesar Sandino in Nicaragua—as violent leaders. The myth-making machine of Hollywood absorbed these historical figures and created a set of expectations and prejudices based on race, country of origin, and class.

Racial preconceptions about Latin Americans had been common in American popular culture since the nineteenth century's expansion of Anglo culture into Texas. The expansionist drive had needed an ideological system to legitimize violence, injustice, and land theft.[15] Racism against Mexicans played this role. By the twentieth century, this racism had translated into popular stereotypes such as El Bandido and attempted to convey a sense of racial, moral, and intellectual superiority to naturalize the acute social, political, and economic disparities between Anglos and Latinos and between the U.S. and Latin America.[16] Throughout the first half of the century, American popular culture provided a consistent flurry of representations of Latin Americans as violent and macho and their societies as chaotic, dirty, corrupt, and often in revolution.

That American popular culture had continued serving as a propaganda machine for the U.S. government's economic, military, and cultural expansionism into Latin America is, perhaps, obvious. The only glimmers of fairness regarding representation of Latin Americans came about when the U.S. needed a stronger alliance with the region

because of World War II. Two films shaped by diplomacy were produced during this époque: one, *Juarez* (1939), starring Paul Muni, depicted the war of Mexico against France. The second, *Viva Zapata!* (1952), starring Marlon Brando, narrated the revolutionary war of the 1910s. As is clear from the selection of themes that these Good Neighbor films dealt with, even with diplomacy as a factor, Latin America was considered a vehicle for narratives of war, revolution, violence, and civic chaos. In the same tradition, John Huston directed *We Were Strangers* in 1949. In this film, John Garfield plays Tonny Fenner, a professional soldier who goes to Cuba to help fight the repressive regime of Machado. With other Cubans, Fenner organizes an assassination attempt that is discovered, and he dies, machine-gun in hand, just as the people of Havana go to the streets to overthrow Machado.

The news treatment of the Cuban revolutionaries and the popular images of Latin Americans produced the disposition to see Castro, at least momentarily, as a hero, though clearly one that commanded violence. The same disposition based on racist assumptions about the nature of Latin American people and their societies served to reconfigure Castro's image during the 1960s and to make him, and the revolution, one of violence (the Missile Crisis) and repression, and Cuba as the perfect land for "communism" or at least the perfect site for the transfer of American preconceptions about communism.

The Stage: The Field of Culture

Since 1960, Cuba has occupied a curious place in the imaginations of most Americans. Idealized by the left and demonized by the right, Cuba has been an agonistic discursive construction partly determined by Americans' fears regarding political change or political stasis. Such ideological positions regarding Cuba have changed through time. The fear of things communist, and in particular all things Cuban, was clearly hegemonic during the 1950s, but less so during 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the Cold War mentality was not the only ideological and discursive base from which to interpret America's relationship with Cuban film. The social transformations of the 1960s did not only change the realm of politics and the way that Americans made politics. They also shaped the way individuals related to culture and, of necessity, the field of culture itself, in particular in regard to politics.

As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, the field of cultural production is by its very nature defined by the struggles within and is transformed accordingly.[17] But this is not the only way transformation happens; the field of cultural production is interlocked with the field of power and a shift in the latter will result in a shift in the former.[18] The many changes in American society that occurred during the 1960s, in particular the transformation of the political realm, happened alongside changes in the field of culture including popular culture, film distribution and exhibition, and academic institutions. These provided key institutional, ideological, and interpretive frameworks for Cuban film. Because Cuban film is political, foreign, and distributed in piece-meal fashion, I will briefly comment

on the politicized culture, foreign film in the United States, and film festivals. These institutional sites of analysis are interesting to me because I believe they helped determine modes of reception; thus, they are not meant to be exhaustive examinations or histories of these important institutional contexts.

As is commonly argued in cultural studies and film theory, culture is always political; yet, different cultural forms have allowed for different expressions of politics and different ideologies and have engendered specific ways of embracing the politics embedded in culture. On the one hand, the political in culture can be embedded in the text or in the field of production that made the text possible. On the other hand, the political in culture can be part of what the text refers to; that is, political art and political song take as their referent for expression what social and historical conventions define as political. Some political songs, such as work songs, comment on labor as a way of commenting on politics. Other political art may refer to gender or race as ways of expressing political views of their time. Among the things that mark the 1960s as an époque is precisely the types and popularity of cultural expression that used politics as their referent. Indeed, Arthur Marwick argues that the period from 1958 to 1974 can better be understood as a cultural revolution. And it is precisely in the politicization of cultural texts, cultural production, and cultural consumption where one may find one of the most lasting legacies of the decade.[19]

Though the counter-culture meant the formation of new political and lifestyle arrangements, it depended, particularly in a nation as large as the United States, on

cultural forms that could give expression to the immensely affective aspects of the social revolution. When mass mediated, these cultural forms also played a fundamental role in constituting an imaginary community of people across geographies and social strata. Music was perhaps the most important type of cultural expression that people in general and youth in particular used to construct political identities during the 1960s. This is not to say that the 1960s-music was always political. For many, the 1960s were a continuation of the apolitical 1950s, and this was reflected in much of music, youth culture, and movies of the time. Beach culture, surfers, twisters, and party animals of the 1950s continued existing during the 1960s, and their explorations of sexual mores, hedonism, and drugs continued until the second half of the 1960s.[20] But aside the important relatively apolitical cultural traditions of the time, the 1960s gave way to important intellectual and counter-cultural music forms that were used as political expression and by individuals interested in constructing political identities. Two examples: The folkniks, a group of mostly white, middle-class, urban youth embraced old-time ballads and new ways of singing folk music such as blues. This group of musicians and singers, including Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, and even older artists like Pete Seeger and the Weavers, catered to the intellectual, university-centered youth and constructed imaginary links between Madison and Berkeley, Austin and Chicago, and hippies and leftists. Their music and lyrics ranged from traditional forms such as old work-songs and blues to contemporary ballads that protested the social conditions of the time (103-123). Also certain types of rock ‘n’ roll and certain musicians were

considered political and therefore good cultural material with which to build a political identity.

The popularity of youth culture was evidence of youth's economic viability as cultural consumers and, by the end of the 1960s, of the importance of political signifiers to the success of some youth marketed cultural products. Volkswagen made a point of linking their products to the peace and the hippie movement, and record labels were created to cater to specialized youth audiences not interested in consuming run-of-the-mill music. Black labels and recording companies specializing in R&B music and political songs joined the group of existing corporations profiting from rock 'n' roll and other youth music.[21] On a different cultural front, publishing houses in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago served the highly specialized tastes of a growing politically savvy readership. Magazines like *Village Voice*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Book Review*, *Ms*., and *The Nation* gave a distinctive and politicized view of the world to a largely leftist, liberal, and feminist national readership. Local magazines did the same for local readers. The counter-culture was a reality and it was published, recorded, reviewed, and exhibited in a growing field of cultural production where politics had become an everyday conversation topic.

Alongside these important cultural transformations that affected the politicization of film was the multiplication since the 1950s of foreign film distribution that brought to American audiences art and revolutionary cinema in quantities not seen before. Several factors had come together to open up the American market to foreign films. The

Paramount decision of the end of the 1940s and other litigations in the 1950s separated the business of exhibition from production and distribution and forbade block-booking. No longer able to guarantee the distribution of B-movies, and, as Janet Staiger notices, no longer able to see profit on cheap films, movie production decreased. After WWII, Hollywood majors reduced the number of films, leaving second-run theaters without films (from 263 features produced in 1950, the number of releases went down to only 140 in 1963). [22] Changes in the film industry's structures in the United States due to production shortages benefited the recuperating film industries of France, Italy, and Germany that had been devastated by WWII by opening exhibition opportunities.[23] In addition to these shortages that threatened exhibitors, television had begun to compete with movie theaters, and studios had begun unloading many of their older B-releases through television. Foreign films, however, were not desirable television products. Second-run exhibitors thus showed outstanding foreign films from Italy (Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni), Sweden (Ingmar Bergman), Argentina (Torri Nillson), India (Satyajit Ray), and England's Angry Young Men (2-3). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s American audiences witnessed the formation of strong competing national industries and film traditions. From Italian Neorealism to French New Wave to Third Cinema, audiences and critics praised the aesthetic and political quality of these films, often noting the serious and intellectually responsible qualities of art and foreign cinema.[24]

The popularity of foreign films in the United States was never total nor their acceptance widespread. According to Christine Ogan, the potential audience for these films was never more than ten percent of the total audience.[25] This ten percent, she continues, has tended to exhibit specific demographic characteristics that included a university education and living close to a university campus or in large urban settings. The proliferation of foreign films in these types of locations and among specific audiences helped established specific audience expectations regarding the films that have included issues of overall filmic quality (so many of these films received critical acclaim), sexuality (more frank depiction of sexuality were typically found in films from Europe),[26] "sophistication" (that these films were shown among the educated in places like New York and San Francisco), and politics.[27] Though never producing a huge audience, these films and their audiences influenced the definition of what it meant to be a university student, an educated person, and a discerning movie-goer.

In addition to the increasing number of exhibitors willing to show foreign films, film festivals, which, beginning in the late 1950s, have been increasingly popular, served as venues for foreign and political film. Following the success of the Academy Awards that began in 1927, international film festivals multiplied around the world during the 1940s and 1950s. In the United States, the San Francisco Film Festival began in 1957 and the New York International Film Festival began in 1963.[28] More importantly for my argument, film festivals catering to specific political identities,

including leftist and feminist identities, began to be organized around this time. I will comment on two examples.

Even though the 1960s marked one of the high points of the Cold War, some movies from behind the Iron Curtain had made it to American screens. From Poland, Roman Polanski's *Knife in the Water* was shown in the First New York Film Festival at Lincoln Center in 1963. Other films from the USSR such as *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959), *My Name is Ivan* (1962), and *Dimka* (1962) were also exhibited at other festivals (60). However, because of the special place that Cuba occupied in the American imagination, no film from Cuba was shown to general audiences during the 1960s. In 1971, as commented in chapter 1, American Documentary Films (ADF) joined efforts with the Cuban Film Institute (Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos, ICAIC) to organize a Festival of Cuban Films in several U.S. cities, with an opening festival in New York City. The festival was held in 1972 to a highly politicized audience and was opposed also by a politicized citizenry. ADF, a leftist, pro-Cuban, grass-roots organization that had distributed and exhibited leftist films throughout the 1960s, trusted that a politicized audience, accustomed to watching international film, would support the festival. They were correct. The films that were exhibited played to big audiences.

Also in 1972, feminist filmmakers from New York hosted the First International Festival of Women's Films, which attempted to continue radical feminist consciousness-raising efforts. Kristina Nordstrom, the film programmer, commented:

> We had been in a consciousness-raising group and I was tired of just talking. I wanted to do some kind of action…I had worked for the New York Film Festival… and I knew the steps of organizing a film festival...I knew there had been some films made by women but I didn't know how many. And I thought a festival of women's films would really spotlight that for women and be something positive that they could identify with and encourage more women to do it and convince the world at large that women have those kinds of capacities so that they could get more work.[29]

In these two instances, film festival organizers understood their goals to be political and trusted that a politicized audience would be responsive to their efforts. Given the importance of politics to the crafting of leftist and feminist identities, it is not surprising that these organizations were able to find an audience. Moreover, since the 1950s (in particular with the beatniks and the greasers) cultural consumption had acquired a political connotation. Culture had become essential to the definition and maintenance of political identities. The magazines and books read, the music heard, the movies seen, and the marches and concerts attended identified the individual and spoke of her/his political convictions. This was particularly true of radical leftists and feminists since their identities were partly built on a critique of mainstream culture and the way such culture represented the ideology of the powerful and/or patriarchy.

The Academy and Subjugated Knowledges

After the defeats of the 1960s counter-culture, many activists, including feminists, went back to universities to pursue graduate degrees and finish dissertations, where they became part of the transformational force that had been changing university institutions since the 1960s and that revolutionized the social sciences and the humanities.[30] In this

veritable educational and academic revolution, racial minorities, women, and leftist students pushed for a radical revision of canonic disciplines and for the formation of other disciplines that could account for the experiences of counter-hegemonic and marginalized groups. African-American, women and gender, Latino, gay and lesbian, and cultural studies, as well as recently developed disciplines like communications and film studies became proof of a shift of expectations regarding post-secondary education.[31] Climbing the ivory tower, and occupying a traditional position in hegemony, was no longer the only reason for acquiring university education: since the politico-cultural prominence of Berkeley in 1960, being at university meant also the possibility of constructing a social location from where to be counter-hegemonic. Within these new departments and old departments of literature, philosophy, history, and anthropology, these post-1960 scholars created new knowledges that attempted to explain the force, direction, and defeat of radicalism across the world and the upsurge of women, racial and ethic minorities, and the colonized toward the center of the public sphere. Culture became a key way of discussing these areas of inquiry for, through the study of culture one could understand the impact of the past on the present,[32] the constitution of social subjects,[33] as well as elaborate on the presentness of the marginal,[34] and, finally, conceive of utopian ideas that could manufacture a more egalitarian future.[35]

The centrality of culture to these academic endeavors made hermeneutics central to the production of knowledge about society and the theorizing of liberating practices.

Indeed, the ideological import of culture has never been more essential to the social sciences and humanities than within the last forty years.[36] With this, I am not trying to suggest that the importance of ideology and the social are recent theoretical insights, but rather, that the interest in culture due to the huge influence of cultural studies, the Frankfurt School, the Civil Rights movement, the New Left, and feminism in the American academy brought to centrality issues typically explored only in regard to art, literature, politics, the nation, and civilization.[37] The necessity to account for ideology's maddening subtleties and treacherous effects on the social drove academic discourse and produced a community of cultural workers, including myself, committed to finding better tools to interpret cultural works and practices and their relationships to the individual and to the social.

The quest for a theory-fits-all realities and cultural practices is, however, no longer popular. Though I see my community invested in hermeneutic tasks, I do not see a drive to find *a* hermeneutics. That said, within the social sciences and humanities, Marxism, feminism, and critical race theories are common approaches, and there has been a tendency to use some of these theories' principles as general hermeneutic principles for the interpretation of culture. So, in presenting in this chapter some of the ways in which the New Left and feminists saw the world, I have already introduced the principles of the hermeneutics that, I argue, are at play within the leftist, liberal, and feminist communities that reviewed the Cuban films that I am interested in investigating.

The "insurrection of subjugated knowledges," like Foucault calls them, were not simply the result of the 1960s social movements.[38] As Stanley Aranowitz has commented, these knowledges were a continuation of a critique of positivism that had taken roots in American and European social sciences from mid-nineteenth century (positivism continues today in disciplines such as economics and political science).[39] Because of the, mostly Marxist, critiques of positivism in the last century, and more contemporary critiques of reason coming from feminist and critical race theory, the investigation of culture has been carried on for the last few decades through methodologies that share some of the positivist goals to scienticism and others that reject them. Though different professional fields have been influenced by their particular relation to the positivist battle, criticism, a professional branch of literary studies, film studies, media studies, and art history, is typically undertaken with anti-positivist methodologies and theories, and, thus, I will concentrate on these.

The role subjugated knowledges have played in shaping academic standards of criticism is something that has been researched within the fields of film, literary, feminist, and critical race studies.[40] Not much has been written on non-academic criticism, such as criticism carried on in newspapers, magazines, and other non-academic institutions; however, it is likely that post-secondary education and academic disciplines such as literature and film are common backgrounds among those writing film criticism in magazines, newspapers, and other media. It would then follow that these critics have been exposed to similar theoretical and methodological considerations

regarding film, aesthetics, and criticism and that they either embrace some of the ideas representative of subjugated knowledges or at least have to acknowledge their existence and importance to criticism and their readership. In either a case, it could be argued that changes in academic criticism have transformed, at least partly, the practice of non-academic criticism.[41] The next chapter explores this issue further.

But what is included in these hermeneutic frameworks that academic and non-academic criticism used? First, one must consider that heavily influencing these hermeneutic styles were Marxisms (particularly Marxist aesthetics as it is found in French poststructuralism and cultural studies), feminisms, and critical race theories that provided fundamental templates for cultural criticism. Because most of the films I analyze deal with gender, and because I am particularly interested in feminist and leftist critical reception, I will concentrate on those factors that helped form a feminist and leftist hermeneutics and their theoretical outcomes.

Feminism as Preamble to Hermeneutics

Although, in a broad sense, feminist film hermeneutics and criticism are linked to other subjugated knowledges, feminist criticism's specificity can be explained better by reference to the epistemological challenges and social practices of feminist activisms of the 1960s.[42] In this section I describe in general terms and with only a few key examples some important features of feminist film criticism. Given the richness of the subject matter and its philosophical and historiographical intricacies, this brief study

cannot do justice to the topic. However, even this succinct description is useful to contextualize the interpretive approaches of critics in the 1970s. Finally, given that the reviews and cultural commentaries by U.S. critics of Cuban films span from 1970 to 1985, in this section I will only be concerned with the state of feminist film criticism until 1985. Because of this, I will not consider anything published after that year.

Roughly speaking, feminist film criticism came from general feminisms of the era. Feminist activism since the 1960s can be divided in two key strands of social and political practices. The first, espoused by mostly white professional women and carried on in policy circles, was a quest for equal rights on the tradition of liberalism. Policy organizations like the National Organization of Women (NOW) formed this strand of feminism, often called liberal feminism, which reached national presence and influence in the 1970s.[43] The second, espoused by white and Black women and carried out at the grassroots level, was a quest for a revision of the systems of sex and gender in the tradition of Marxian and post-Freudian philosophies, in particular theoretical claims about the formation of gendered, sexual, and capitalist subjects.[44] This strand is often referred to as radical feminism. Each version of feminism engendered a specific style of being political.

NOW was formed in 1966 when the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) refused to enforce the provision for sexual equality in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Headed by Betty Friedan, Pauli Murray, Mary Eastwood, and Kathryn Clarenbach, NOW began as a lobbying organization working within the structure of

government and attempting to effect change in the status of women in the public realm. Although proposals from NOW included issues regarding the private lives of women such as abortion and birth control, the bulk of the demands related to public policy such as alimony, divorce law, child custody, and job discrimination (18-19).

The women that participated in NOW at the beginning were white professionals interested in changing women's consciousness so that they could participate in mainstream society (39). NOW's commitment to speak their issues in terms of policy and liberal theories of rights made it easy to label NOW a conservative organization, particularly in the activist landscape of the 1960s. Though over the years NOW embraced progressive agendas like abortion, lesbian rights, and racial and gender equality, other leftists, lesbian, and radical feminist organizations considered NOW's identity as an organization interested in societal and political reform to be inadequately aggressive. That said, to the conservative mainstream, NOW seemed radical. Within the overall schema, then, NOW and similar groups advocating women's rights through equitable policies are liberal feminisms.

Other women were interested in transforming a wider gamut of gendered and sexed structures that included the private realm, a culture of sexism, and the way women (and men) were constituted as subjects to gender and sex.[45] Though the development of radical feminism is too complex a phenomenon to be fully explored here, examining some of its connections to the 1960s Civil Rights Movement illustrates

how culture, hermeneutics, and self-construction became common concerns in this socio-epistemological practice.

Radical feminisms (including "cultural feminisms"),[46] Sara Evans argues, "first developed from within the ranks, and revolt, of young southern blacks."[47] A core of women activists involved with the Students Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and who participated first in sit-ins and sit-in-related activities (such as boycotts of Woolworth's and other corporations) and later in the voting registration drives in Southern states (in particular Mississippi) made important contributions to the development of early radical feminism (25-59). In general, women's participation in the struggles offered opportunities for self-assertion (through breaking with familiar constrains and conservatism that would typically forbid them from joining an activist organization working for and with Blacks), self-discovery (through doing things they never thought they could do, and doing them well), self-construction (through experiencing fear and violence as old selves were shredded like oldskins), and self-recognition (through knowing and following other courageous Black and white women (65-75).

Besides these benefits, women's participation in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was important to establish useful principles for later radical feminist organizing. Beginning in 1963, but with more emphasis in 1965, SDS began organizing impoverished communities in urban settings. The Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) applied grass-roots techniques to organize neighborhoods around social

issues. These consciousness-raising efforts consisted in bringing together communities to talk about problems affecting their members that could be solved by collective action (134). This and other tactics of ERAP were later used in feminist organizing: "the anti-leadership bias and emphasis on internal process in ERAP found counterparts in the women's movement's experiments with rotating chairs, intensely personal meetings, and distrust of public spokeswomen; the theory of radicalization through discussions that revealed the social origins of personal problems took shape in the feminist practice of consciousness-raising" (137).

Radical feminism has relied on ideas and theories that understand gender and sexuality as constitutive of the modern capitalist subject. The implication of such ideas and theories are far reaching and have troubled activists and academics since. For instance, liberal feminists can apply theories of emancipation to women and thus hypothesize that granting and protecting the rights of women will result on their liberation. Not so for radical feminists who, in lieu of the constitutive role of sex and gender in our lives and subjectivities, cannot conceive of emancipation as the acquisition of equality with men since masculinity and men, as well as our ideas of equality and rights, have been formed by oppressive social and ideological structures. Unlike in liberal feminism, the categories of gender and sexuality for radical feminists occupy a paradoxical position since they are both oppressive and oppressed; that is, these categories constitute the platform from which a non-oppressive subjectivity can be

built on; and at the same time, these structures have been produced by oppression and thus are embedded and constitutive of patriarchy and capitalism.

To the radical feminist project, eliminating gender oppression required a new societal and personal consciousness; thus, these communities of women used the tactic of consciousness rising first applied by the New Left. The process by which a new feminist consciousness would be achieved is built on a series of interlocking principles. First, in radical feminism, women's experiences are central, since they are both the evidence of oppression and the root to liberation (56). Second, since patriarchy is embedded in the subjectivities and subject positions available to men, women's experience are more likely to prepare them to occupy vanguard positions in the sexual revolution (62). Third, since sexuality is at the root of women's experiences, sexuality should be at the center of the radical feminist movement (63). Fourth, to become an agent in the revolution, a woman must embrace the principles of radical feminism and understand her oppression. Thus, consciousness-raising groups have been a necessary step in the shaping of the movement and the achievement of personal freedom. Through their emphasis on experience, sexuality, and personal freedom, radical feminists gave meaning to the idea "The personal is political."

At the center of radical feminism has been an impetus to learn to interpret the world in a new way. As a set of theories and activities, radical feminism was a call for a feminist hermeneutics that would see the world through the looking glass of women's experiences and their oppressions. This hermeneutics would make evident the

connections between personal feelings and experiences, social events, and disparate lives, and would rekindle a passion for the community of women while unearthing the patriarchal foundations of non-feminist perspectives and of common-sense, everyday life. Given this focus on a feminist hermeneutics, radical feminists gave a great deal of importance to women's cultural production and to feminist criticism, and in doing so, these people and organizations produced lasting contributions to academic discussions of culture, one of which is feminist film criticism.[48]

Feminist Film Criticism

From 1970 to 1985, feminist film criticism analyzed the role film and other cultural forms play in the constitution, reproduction, and/or challenge of gender and sexual systems of oppression and, increasingly, incorporated racial, and class concerns. As a critical tradition, feminist film criticism was quite varied in terms of methodologies, theories, and even political concerns. To organize this otherwise too complex subject, I center on four areas—similar to those I examined in relation to Cuba (Chapter 4)—that correspond to challenges issued by feminist film criticism against traditional film cultural practices and texts. This areas are: The Politicization of Film and Culture; Hermeneutics and Critical Approaches; Feminist Aesthetics; and Feminist Epistemology. It is important to remark that this section is more succinct than my examination of similar issues regarding Cuba. The reason is that while all of the Cuban reviews and writings investigated in Chapter 5 had a very close relation to the

hermeneutics explored in Chapter 4, feminist film criticism informs only some of the reviews and writings of the following Chapter. Finally, paralleling the dates of the evidence found in the next Chapter, in this section I review writings on feminist film criticism up to 1985.

The Politicization of Film in Feminist Criticism

As discussed above, feminist activisms of the 1960s, in particular radical feminism, understood the importance of culture for the constitution of systems of oppression. Because of this, feminist circles saw cultural criticism as a fundamental political activity.[49] But how exactly cultural systems oppressed was a matter that required the development of ways of seeing gender, sex, women, and men in terms of their cultural constitution. Feminist film criticism owes early insights into this matter to the work of Simone de Beauvoir, who had discussed the marginalization of women due to the woman's cultural construction as "Other."[50] Influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, de Beauvoir argued that the woman was a "creature" necessary to man as an Other, for the notion of "woman as other" confirmed man as Self. As such, woman was a changing category filled with male fantasies and fears as well as ideas of eternal beauty and sacrifice (4).

A couple of decades later in 1969, Kate Millet (*Sexual Politics*) reapplies some of de Beauvoir's concerns when she explores how canonical literary works rely on misogynist representations of women and are thus invested in the reproduction of patriarchy.[51] Millet observes how female characters in the classic works of Norman

Mailer, Henry Miller, and D.H. Lawrance are cultural constructs where male fantasies of the woman as sexual object are repeatedly played. [52] In 1972, only two years after Millet's book, the first feminist film criticism journal, *Women and Film*, appeared. Its critical agenda, Sue Thornham observes, was political and borne out of an awareness of women's oppression at the "psychological, social and economic" levels.[53] The woman as object and as Other were also central issues that this journal wanted to address. Sharon Smith, for instance, is concerned with the objectification of women in film.[54] For her, film's distorted ideas reflect male fantasies. Thus, in film women are possessions (e.g., *The Cheat*) and sexual objects (e.g., Mae West). One of her main propositions is to have a more varied and realistic set of female characters in film (15-18).

Shortly after, in 1973, Marjorie Rosen and Molly Haskell (who will be critics who discuss the Cuban films upon their release in the United States) published two key monographs where they explored how women were represented in mainstream film. Their approaches, sometimes called "sociological,"[55] understand the politics of film in relation to film's distorted representations of women reality. The function of these representations are political because "the woman as myth" functions not only to mirror reality but also as an ideology that naturalizes gender and sexual discrimination (14). Smith, Rosen, and Haskell fall somewhere between a liberal and radical feminist position. They analyze the constructed nature of sex and gender but often tend to

assume that merely producing more realistic representations of women will solve problems of women's oppression.

Shortly later, Claire Johnston and Pam Cook explore a more precise way in which the ideological import of film texts and practices functions as a politics of oppression. Johnston, writing in 1973, associated film texts and practices with ideology, but her ideas of ideology went beyond deception (which was implied in previous feminist work). For her, ideology is more subtle in that it is embedded in all aspects of the filmic text (e.g., codes of realism, the camera lens, and narrative techniques); therefore, the political goals of feminist film criticism could not be achieved simply by addressing the truth-value of filmic representations but required the examination film's "depiction of reality;… the language of cinema/the depiction of reality must also be interrogated, so that a break between ideology and text is effected."[56] With Cook, Johnston continued problematizing ideology in 1974 and foregrounding the subtle ways in which patriarchy functions in filmic texts.[57] Using psychoanalysis (see below), Cook and Johnston explored the textual depths at which the Law of the Father is at work in the films by Raoul Walsh, films some feminist scholars considered progressive. Pointing out how women are reduced to signs that male characters exchange, Cook and Johnston's work further problematized the political task of feminist film criticism by rendering oppressive textual elements previously unseen as that by critical eyes.[58]

Given film's perceptual characteristics and its reliance on the visible, the political character of feminist film criticism continued emphasizing new "ways of seeing" film

and other culture work as a prelude to political action. During the 1970s and 1980s, a continuous push to see deeper textual structures as factors involved in women's and men's gendered oppression gave way to more nuanced ideological and psychological analyses of film texts and practices including Screen theory approaches (see Chapters 1 and 2) that sometimes included Marxist/ideological methods such as semiotics.[59] In summary, being a feminist film critic was virtually simultaneously being political--intervening in gender politics.

Hermeneutics and Critical Approaches

Early feminist film criticism relied on sociological approaches to analyze film. Centered on female stereotypes and straightforward notions of representation (as true or false), researchers investigated the realm of the visible in relation to issues of referents. Film images and representations were thus criticized for indexing non-representative elements of women's realities or for indexing cultural myths and male fantasies rather than women's everyday experiences. But as the 1970s progressed, the visible was going to become a more complex matter.

Christian Metz, Thornham narrates, extends the hermeneutic impulse of film criticism with his investigations of psychoanalysis and cinema (37).[60] Metz links the spectator's ocular structures to cinema's visible and perceptual apparatus. Furnishing this link is a primary system of desire ("the desire to see") whereby the film spectator experiences voyeuristic pleasures that reinforce the ego's sense of epistemological mastery. Laura Mulvey further elaborates on Johnston's and Metz's ideas by theorizing

the visual pleasures of male viewership.[61] Like Johnston, Mulvey uses the insight of psychoanalysis that "Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other." The woman is "bearer of meaning, not the maker of meaning" (23). For her, and echoing Metz's ideas, Hollywood narratives were constructed for a voyeuristic male viewer who can easily identify with the typically male central characters and who can fetishize or punish through visual investigation the female characters. Visual pleasure, then, was an expression of the desire to see the woman as a sign that stands for men's erotic fantasies and also as a sign of men's "more powerful ideal ego."[62]

Mary Ann Doane expands on Mulvey to argue that the male viewer relies on the distance existent between him and the screen to experience desire. [63] This distance makes the film-viewing process one that locks the male viewer into a sexual identity of oppression but that leaves open female viewership to other possibilities (234). Female spectatorship is for Mulvey and Doane a problematic thing that Mulvey explains as passive and thus masochistic and Doane, given that the preferred viewer subject position is masculine, as an instance of masochism, cross-dressing (taking up the male's position), or masquerading (taking up the female's position but from a distance). For Doane, this psychic step that women have to take to see mainstream narrative cinema in any sort of positive way renders female spectatorship as potentially subversive for it relies on the masquerade; in the end, this proposition denotes the social construction of gender and lays down the possibility of placing constraints on it (240). In an optimist note, Doane reminds her reader that as Michel Foucault has observed (and as I have

discussed earlier), repression (such as female repression) should not only be theorized as a lack of power, but as a position from which potential power is also exists (241).

Though psychoanalysis played an important role in setting up a theoretical agenda for 1970s and 1980s feminist film criticism, feminism also includes ideological approaches. [64] Marxism informs feminist ideological approaches that understand gender and sexuality as social, cultural, and ideological phenomena manifested in film texts and practices.[65] Although to a certain degree, all the approaches above assume Marxist aesthetics, theorists like Annette Kuhn have placed materialism at their center of their projects, with ideology as one of the points of entry into cultural analysis.[66] For Kuhn, both "sex/gender systems" and "the cultural" are subsumed under ideology, which means that it is possible to intervene in culture and have an effect on sex/gender systems.[67] She takes this insight to argue for cultural practices (e.g., challenges to the television and film industries) that can affect the systems of sex/gender. Because Kuhn also identifies feminism with oppositional practices, and because she recognizes that cultural texts do not have inherent meanings, her ideas about feminist practices relate more to the political nature of the practice than to its aesthetic qualities. Favoring the social aspects of cultural consumption is a way of addressing the conditions of existence of filmic texts and viewer. Indeed, for Kuhn, the moment of reception of the filmic work is the moment at which meaning is constructed, and since a plethora of social, historical, and economic factors influence reception, sense-making ceases to be purely a psychic process (16).

Kuhn's emphasis on viewers and the potential of reception as a site of political rebellion marks a shift in feminist film criticism. Over the course of the later 1980s, audiences and viewers would share, with the text, the central spot in feminist criticism. The shift happened slowly and several factors influenced it including the recognition that meaning was not embedded in the text (e.g., Kuhn), the necessity to theorize the female spectator (e.g., Doane), and ideas of narrative excess (e.g., melodrama and other woman's genres).

Though Mulvey's early work had left little room for a female spectator, Doane's work provided a space for thinking of a more political-progressive female spectatorship. As she observes, if Mulvey is correct, and mainstream films construct filmic systems optimally for the heterosexual male viewer, , female viewers, in their quest for identification with the protagonist might masquerade as women in order to view dominant cinema.[68] Though Doane finishes with an optimist note and states that power is possible within oppression, one must not be overly hopeful. As Doane points out, the process of spectatorship becomes unstable in particular when women are viewing "woman's film." Since these films seek out female identification, and the identifying process is masculine, female viewers are placed in the position of having to enact masochistic scenarios in order to deal with the instability of the female viewing process (54). This is not a healthy option.

It is also prudent to mention here Elizabeth Cowie's contribution to the matter of what might count as progressive identifications.[69] In her analysis of the detective film,

Coma, Cowie challenges the idea that a single look exists in cinematic texts. Instead, in her analysis, she shows how the relationship of spectator to filmic text is better understood as a "continual construction of looks, with a constant production of spectator-position and thus subject" (137). Based on the process of knowledge acquisition in this film and for its female protagonist who struggles to make her questions believable within the narrative and to the audience, Cowie argues that the narrative offers the viewers only intermittent identifications (120-135).

Though cultural studies's influence to feminist film criticism can be traced back to the end of the 1970s, by 1985 this influence was very clearly felt.[70] According to Mary C. Kearney, cultural studies was mentioned as a viable research approach in feminist film circles as far back as 1973 (Julia Lesage). However, Kearney continues, it is by the end of the decade when Christine Gledhill and Maureen Turim firmly placed cultural studies as a desirable alternative to psychoanalytic approaches. At this time, the dominance of Screen theory was such, that those who used cultural studies were marginalized in the field. Throughout the 1980s things changed and cultural studies became more central feminist film criticism.

In 1985, Ien Ang gave an account of television viewing that used some film theory in unusual ways.[71] Her study of the reception of *Dallas* in Holland characterized that televisual text as a melodrama that, like film melodrama, is full of intensity, excess, and contradictions. Moreover, this endless narrative and its multiple characters produce ambiguous identifications (75). Though Ang sees the women's identification with the

melodramatic imagination (its fatalism and powerlessness) as masochistic, she contends that this is experienced in the realm of "fantasy" and thus bracketed off from reality (135). While Ang recognizes that women's pleasures watching *Dallas* are hardly the pleasures of feminism, she sees them as necessary to women's engagement with a reality otherwise precarious.[72]

From 1972 to 1985, feminist film criticism included sociological (e.g., stereotypes and representation), psychoanalytic, Marxist, and cultural studies approaches. In general, and as also elaborated in Chapter 1 and 2, these criticisms began giving more importance to the complexities of the filmic texts and only later opened up to questions of the multiplicity and complexities of audiences.

Feminist Aesthetics

In 1978 several feminist film critics (Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne, B. Ruby Rich, and Anna Marie Taylor) briefly discussed feminist aesthetics.[73] At issue was not simply what type of films feminists had produced, but rather, how likely it was that mainstream filmic texts would offer radical potential to women. These critics were not very confident. Addressing the issue under the spell of Metz and Mulvey, they saw little promise in popular film. Except for Marlene Dietrich's persona (which offers a possible lesbian identification) and Brecht's Marxist aesthetic, an actual filmic text having libratory potential had not happened.

Yet, feminist film practices existed and tended to have certain aesthetic characteristics that several scholars including Rich and Kuhn documented. Trying to

come to terms with the growing and factitious field of film criticism, Rich proposed a set of unusual categories of films to unify the language of feminist criticism and the aesthetics identified with women or feminism.[74] Among the categories are the following: films of validation are works that in a realistic fashion explore women's lives and cultures; films of correspondence are those works that use personal styles of "writing; reconstructive films are films that use a genre and fashion it for feminism; medusan films are those that use laughter and camp as subversion; corrective realism are features using realism with care for women and centered on women; and projectile films are those films made by patriarchy, aimed at women (37-41).

These unusual categories reveal a complex subfield of film production that could be considered feminist or for women's consumption. Not surprisingly, Kuhn later recognized that imposing a film aesthetics on feminist practices was, indeed, counterintuitive. Instead, she provided a set of feminist uses of film aesthetics[75]; in so doing, she highlighted the reception of aesthetics as the central issue to feminist film practices.[76] Realism for instance, she observed, though broadly used in Hollywood cinema, was a good medium for the presentation of political issues. Thus, 1970s Hollywood films organized around a woman's self-discovery (e.g., *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, d. Martin Scorsese, 1975; *Starting Over*, d. Alan Pakula, 1979), for instance, lent themselves to feminist uses by some female audiences for they allowed for identification with winning, female, protagonists (135).

Other realist genres such as socialist realism, direct cinema, and documentary also offer opportunities for feminist film reception. Socialist realism often provides representations of heroism and processes of self-construction (*Salt of the Earth*, d.Herbert Biberman, , 1935). Feminists have used direct cinema and documentary to represent the lives of women, often using autobiography and, thus, self-construction, as a political and epistemological tool. Women's experiences areforegrounded, and viewers are invited to identify with the lives of women (144-149).

The second general tactic used by feminist film practitioners is counter-cinema. This filmmaking approach attempts to break with dominant filmic codes. As Kuhn observes, the tradition often borrows from Brecht and proposes an active engagement between viewer and text based on the deconstruction and questioning of filmic codes (161). As an example of counter-cinema, she uses Sara Gómez's *One Way or Another* (1977), a film that draws on documentary techniques such as interviews with real people and that addresses social issues (see next Chapter and Chapter 5).

What Kuhn and Rich show in their discussions of feminist aesthetics is the foregrounding of works that can be used by women (and men) to further the varied political goals of feminisms. Moreover, in foregrounding some works, they helped construct a new film canon, one that accounts for the social and aesthetic needs of women and that uses political value as a valid standard of quality. Millet had already shown that the literary canon was implicated in the reproduction of patriarchal structures, which meant that it needed to be criticized, revised, or, simply, dumped.

Since the early 1970s, thus, the substitution of misogynist cultural canons became one of the tasks for feminist critics. During the 1970s and 1980s, feminists' challenged canons in literature, film, television, and art.[77] They were ready to consider revolutionary cinematic practices as political expression.

Epistemology

Each of the previous issues has provided feminism with fertile ground from which to build critiques of epistemology. This has turned feminist film criticism into a complex philosophical enterprise that challenges all elements of the production of knowledge and the interpretation of the world. As a long-lasting critique of knowledge, feminism is a social practice that has underlined the ethical and the aesthetics of epistemology, their interrelations, and their codependences. And, at the point where ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology converge, feminism has discovered tyranny and freedom. The insight is that our knowledge has been built on an ethos of oppression From this kernel, the body, emotion, the feminine, women, the non-white, non-Western, the particular, experience, the biography, autobiography, Black culture, women's pictures, *écriture féminine*, Latinidad, sexuality, pleasure, and love become philosophy. As seen above, they also become the guidelines for a critical hermeneutics.

Conclusion

In 1973 critics may have been superstars, but, as all superstars, they depended on a public willing to believe that the qualities they possessed were special and

outstanding. Since the critic is a type of author, the roles she/he performs to fit within the grid of culture and the grid of power characterizes her/his function in society. The critic's function is overdetermined and multiple. In this chapter I commented on contexts that had the potential to politicize the critics' social function from 1970 to 1985.

I hypothesize, and hope to show in the following chapter, that the modus operandi of the critic, her/his mode of reception, is not constituted through sheer will on his/her part. It is historic and historicizable. If this is so, then it is also reasonable to think that critics' modus operandi relate to the constitution over time of specific political identities available to them. It is within such historical identities and ways of being that a political critic finds dispositions to view culture as political and thus to view cultural criticism as an activity that forms part of the process of becoming a political individual. In addition, it is within the historicity of these identities that a political critic encounters specific hermeneutic styles proper to interpreting the world.

Returning to the reception of Cuban films by critics in the U.S.A., I anticipated that some of their hermeneutic styles originated on broad historical factors affecting most members of society. Among these, I proposed, were the U.S.-Cuba political relations and the politicization of culture occurring during the 1960s. Others were more specific to the critic's cultural positions such as the aura of foreign films, the way these were distributed (e.g., film festivals, universities), and the normalization of the study of culture's politics. Because most of the films I am concerned with have female

protagonists and deal with issues of gender and sex, I discussed feminism and feminist film criticism as two social and epistemological practices that cut across the factors previously mentioned.

A feminist hermeneutics has been elaborated everywhere in society by committed feminists interested in debunking patriarchal culture; however, this elaboration has happened more intensely within the academy. As part of the academic revolution that occurred because of the critique of positivism that began in the nineteenth century and the rise of subjugated knowledges and peoples within academic communities since the 1960s, feminist hermeneutics is itself a critique of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Moreover, the personal as political, one key aspect of radical feminism (and critical race theory) since the 1960s, is the center of this challenge to epistemology and the center of feminist hermeneutics. Thus, the body, emotions, experience, and autobiography become common and valuable ways of fashioning interpretations of film. At the opposite end, critiques of epistemology have become critiques of universality and the recognition that mainstream culture and classical epistemology are invested in the reproduction of subjection. Thus, a second aspect of a feminist hermeneutics is the investigation of universalizing structures that may constitute oppression.

In the following chapter, I analyze the reviews that feminist and leftist/liberal critics performed for the five Cuban films in which I am interested. I will treat the reviews not solely as evidence of the subject position of the reviewer or solely as the exercise of historically determined modalities of reception that the reviewer has learned

to use as proper cultural communication. As I have argued, when the critic's function is political, his or her modes of reception and hermeneutic processes can and must be seen as social actions geared toward the performance of the critic's political identity. Using a proper interpretive apparatus is part of this performance, and for feminist and leftist critics this will mean using feminist and leftist criticism. The personal as a political statement, the body, emotion, patriarchy are some of the hermeneutic features likely to be encountered in feminist reviews. Social and class oppression, subjection, and deep structures such as ideology or semiosis are features likely to be present in leftist reviews. But what is more important than simply recognizing that feminist critics use feminism, an obviate, my insight is recognizing that this use is a social practice of freedom, as Foucault describes technologies of selfhood. That is, these reviewers perform normative hermeneutics as political actions and thus within an awareness of the need for social change. The reviewer, in using a political framework, defines herself/himself as an agent of this change, one acting in freedom.

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[1] Arthur Cooper, "Critic as Superstar," *Newsweek*, December 24, 1973: 96.

[2] Joseph Dalton Blades, Jr., *A Comparative Study of Selected American Film Critics: 1958-1974* (New York: Arno Press, 1976): 2-5.

[3] Critics, superstars or not, depend on a public willing to believe that the qualities they possessed are proper to their social role. In this, the critic resembles

an author and as such, "functions" within a system of practices and expectations that constitute her/his uniqueness and distinction. The function of the critic as such is complex since it is overdetermined and multiple; it is overdetermined because it is inscribed within a field of cultural production and, simultaneously, it serves as mediator between this field and society, this field and power, this field and similar fields from other nations. Different elements go into constructing the critic's function: economic, cultural, social, artistic, class, and, of course, political. At the same time that it is overdetermined, this function is multiple in that it occupies different places in the social system and may fulfill quite different roles. Critics may be guardians of the elite's taste; critics may try to reposition cultural works within the field; critics may inform a community of the works and proper interpretations that the community should "consume." And, finally, some critics use the place they occupy in society to highlight their own politics and to bring, through culture, political texts to specific communities. This last type of critic is the one that I am investigating.

[4] Stanley Kauffmann, "Stanley Kauffmann on Films: A Journal of the Plague Years by Stefan Kanfer. *Memories of Underdevelopment*," *New Republic* 168 (May 19, 1973): 22, 32.

[5] Besides the State Department's cultural repression of AFD and the repression of the first Cuban film festival, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was

involved in other activities that reduced civil liberties. An example that targeted communist U.S. citizens is COINTELPRO, a program originally organized by J. Edgar Hoover to discredit and disrupt specific groups and individuals. COINTELPRO was finally exposed in 1971, and the FBI was forced to reform intelligence practices. See Ross Gelbspan, *Break-ins, Death Threats and the FBI: The Covert War against the Central America Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1991).

[6] Taber quoted in Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993), 83.

[7] Other television documentaries have included *Cuba in Arms* (CBS, 1958), which documented Castro's ongoing revolution in the mountains. After Castro's triumph, several documentaries investigated the signs that Cuba was turning communist: *Castro: Year of Power* (NBC, 1960), *What Can We Do About Cuba* (CBS, 1960), and *The Cuban Crisis* (NBC, 1960). After Cuba became officially an enemy of the United States, the interest in Cuba continued but the availability of footage limited the types of documentaries that could be produced. Nonetheless, sporadically, documentaries featuring interviews with Castro, documentaries using old footage, and a few that had access to Cuba did appear. See Richard Schwartz, *Cold War Culture: Media and the Arts, 1945-1990* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2000), 315.

[8] Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 67-69.

[9] For a close examination of the Black support for Cuba and the Cuban support for the Civil Rights movement, see ibid., 147-154.

[10] Schwartz, *Cold War Culture*, 330.

[11] At that time, pressure to end the war was as great as ever, particularly when the American public learned of the My Lai massacre by U.S. troops. Protests in the United States and a failure to succeed militarily eventually brought the Paris Accords of January 31, 1973, which formalized the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the conflict.

[12] Michael Myerson, *Memories of Underdevelopment: The Revolutionary Films of Cuba* (New York: Grossman, 1973), 30.

[13] Myerson was a leader of the New Left since its inception. A Berkeley student, Myerson organized SLATE, a radical leftist political party within the University and went on to construct an ongoing link with the Cuban revolution.

[14] Amos Vogel, Andrew Sarris, Annette Michelson, Dwight MacDonald, Jack Gelger, Jay Cocks, Jonas Mekas, Nat Hentoff, Richard Gilman, Ricki Franklin, Stanley Kauffmann, Stephen Koch, and William Wolf. "Censoring Cuba," Letter, *The New York Review of Books*, May 4, 1972, n.p.

[15] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 311-312.

[16] Charles Ramirez-Berg, "Stereotyping and Resistance: A Crash Course on Hollywood's Latino Imagery," in *The Future of Latino Independent Media: A NALIP Sourcebook*, ed. Chon Noriega (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, 2000), 3-6.

[17] See Randal Johnson, "Editor's Introduction," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 16.

[18] Pierre Bourdieu, "Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 185.

[19] Arthur Marwick, T*he Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[20] Jane Stern and Michael Stern, *Sixties People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

[21] Consider the following examples: Ace Records, specializing in rhythm 'n' blues and rock 'n' roll was founded in 1955. Challenge Records, which also recorded jazz and country, started in 1957. Del-Fi Records, initiated in the same year, specialized in recording "pachuco" artists from LA. Etiquette Records

released its first single in 1961 and specialized in garage rock ‘n’ roll. Goldwax Records, also a 1957 enterprise, recorded gospel and soul music. Jerden Records, now associated with “grunge” music from Seattle, released its first single in 1963. The list goes on. In “Wang Dang Dula!...It’s Rock’n’rollah!” http://members.tripod.com/hoppula/, accessed February 21, 2003. Also, Stax Records, a celebrated soul label, began in 1959. The Acta label, with their brand of psychedelic rock, began in 1967. In Acta album discography, http://www.bsnpubs.com/dot/acta.html, accessed February 21, 2001.

[22] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 183.

[23] Michael F. Mayer, *Foreign Film on American Screens* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 2-3.

[24] See Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 182-195.

[25] Christine Ogan II, “The Audience or Foreign Film in America,” *Journal of Communication* 40 (Fall 1990): 58-77.

[26] See Mayer’s discussion on censorship and foreign films. Mayer, *Foreign Film on American Screens,* 63.

[27] In particular see Staiger’s discussion on art cinema and its audiences. She notes that common expectations regarding this art-film include finding a “message”

presented in a frank and serious way about a social problem. Staiger, *Interpreting Films,* 185-186.

[28] Robert Jr. Meyer, *Festivals U.S.A. and Canada* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1967), 74-79.

[29] Kristina Nordstrom quoted in Kathleen Mary Gregg, "Film as a Cultural Industry: Is It Art or is It Commodity?: The Case of Film Festivals," (Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1995), 55.

[30] For the migration to higher education, see Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 420-438. For commentaries on the way students were seen during the sixties and the value of critical thinking, see Martin Duberman, "On Misunderstanding Student Revels," in *Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion/ Essays/ 1964-1999,* ed. Martin Duberman (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 197-216. For an analysis of how race and politics during the 1970s impacted education, see Martin Duberman, "The Shifting Mood on Campus in the Seventies," in *Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion/ Essays/ 1964-1999,* ed. Martin Duberman (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 197-216.

[31] To read about this revolution in academia, see Stanley Aranowitz, *Roll Over Beethoven: The Return of the Cultural Strife* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan/New

England, 1990). More specifically, regarding the New Left's return to university, see p. 214.

[32] I am referring to inquiries into the way that ideologies, histories, social structures, and, the past, the general, and the universal constitute the present or presents.

[33] This is evidenced in the increasingly common understanding that popular culture had effects and that these effects shaped individuals lives and psyches. See Staiger, *Interpreting Film,* 184.

[34] I am referring to the contributions to the present of the marginal and to the tactical formation of new ways of seeing social practices informed by contemporary marginal practices.

[35] I am referring to the revolutionary potential of counter-hegemonic culture as manifested in, for instance, women's writing, racial and ethnic art, and disenfranchised cultural practices.

[36] I am using ideology to refer to the ability of culture to establish parameters for thinking, feeling, doing, and being that reconstitute hegemonic structures. Thus, my use of ideology tries to be vague on purpose in order to encompass theoretical traditions that disregard strict definition of ideology (such as Louis Althusser's) in

favor of notions such as discourse (Michel Foucault's) and psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan).

[37] For an examination of the role cultural studies have played in contemporary academy, I recommend Aranowitz, *Roll Over Beethoven.* See also Chapter 1 ("Radical Selves in the U.S.") and Chapter 2 ("Film Viewing as Technology").

[38] "Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematizing theory and which criticism—which obviously draws upon scholarship—has been able to reveal." Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 82.

[39] Aranowitz, *Roll Over Beethoven,* 212.

[40] Besides Aranowitz, I found useful Giles Gunn, *The Culture of Criticism and the Criticism of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[41] Which is not to say that these practices are the same. Indeed, regarding foreign film, a great tendency even today is to treat these works as the products of "greatness": film works thus discussed lose their historicity, for they appear engendered solely by the genius of the (typically male) director.

[42] Sue Thornham, *Passionate Detachments: An Introduction to Feminist Film Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Maggie Humm, *Feminism and Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 5.

[43] In what follows, I use NOW as an example of liberal feminism and the particular way of being political.

[44] A strong historiography of feminism gives me the luxury of not having to recount or retell the histories of these two strands of feminism. To learn on the topic, I recommend the appendix to Winifred D. Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 239-248. There, she organizes the literature on feminist histories on relation to focus areas. For a take from film feminist criticism, see Humm, *Feminism and Film*, 6.

[45] Interestingly the Civil Rights movement that had begun during the 1950s influenced both feminist stylistics. Liberal feminists learned some of the legal maneuvers that had made possible Civil Rights victories against school segregation and later desegregation tactics and the voting registration movements. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 25.

[46] See Humm, *Feminism and Film*, 6. See also Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* [1982] (New York: Verso, 1993), 4.

[47] Evans, *Personal Politics*, 25.

[48] This is not to say that liberal feminism has not given importance to cultural production and criticism but to emphasize that culture and criticism have played a different role in radical feminist circles. While for a liberal feminist women's culture is an expression of their equality, for a radical feminist women's culture is a way of exploring the categories of gender and sexuality and a way of reconstituting communities of women.

[49] Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, x; Mary C. Gentile, *Film Feminisms* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 4-5.

[50] Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 3.

[51] Millet began exploring sexual images in the works of Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, D.H. Lawrence (among others) and analyzed them in terms of the authors, and implied readers' expectations regarding female sexuality and power dynamics of gender. Her second chapter is an exploration of patriarchy where she uses anthropology, sociology, and psychology to construct a systemic theory of patriarchy-as-society. Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1969). For influences predating Millet, see Thornham's analysis of the works of Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 4-6.

[52] Like literature, feminist film criticism also began questioning the way that women are represented in film and the way particular genres have been devalued because of their relationship to women. See for instance Molly Haskell's commentaries on women's genres and female stars. Molly Haskell, "The Woman's Film," in *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 153-88. See also Claire Johnston's ideas on gender stereotyping and women's film counter-hegemonic stance. Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema As Counter-Cinema," in *Notes on Women's Cinema*, ed. Claire Johnston (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1973), 24-31.

[53] Sue Thornham, "Part I: Taking Up the Struggle," in *Feminist Film Theory : A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 9.

[54] Sharon Smith, "The Image of Women in Film: Some Suggestions for Future Research" [1972], in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 14-20.

[55] Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 16.

[56] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema" [1973], in *Feminism & Film*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30.

[57] Pam Cook and Claire Johnston, "The Place of Woman in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh" [1974], in *Movies and Methods: Volume II*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 379-87.

[58] For a more detailed commentary on Cook and Johnston's work, see Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 27-32.

[59] Cook and Johnston's work used Marxism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis.

[60] Psychoanalysis has provided also rich accounts of the psychological aspects of texts and readers. Influenced by French poststructuralism, in particular Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous, feminist literary critics have examined the constitution of woman through systems of knowledge and signifying practices. For a review of the work by Irigaray and Cixous regarding *écriture féminine*, see Arleen B. Dallery, "The Politics of Writing (the) Body: Écriture Féminine," in *Gender/Body/Knowledge*, ed. Susan and Jaggar Alison M. Bordo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 52-67.

[61] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" [1974], in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* Editorial Board (London: Routledge, 1992), 22-34.

[62] Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 41.

[63] Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator" [1982], in *The Sexual Subject: A* Screen *Reader in Sexuality*, ed. *Screen* Editorial Board (London: Routledge, 1992), 227-43.

[64] Semiotics has also been part of feminist film criticism but has been less relevant after 1975. Nonetheless, an example of semiotics applied to film is found in Cook and Johnston, "The Place of Woman," 381.

[65] Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, 4.

[66] For comments on Kuhn's work, see Humm, *Feminism and Film*, 26-28; Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 27.

[67] Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, 5.

[68] See Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 52.

[69] Elizabeth Cowie, "The Popular Film as Progressive Text--a Discussion of *Coma*" [1979], in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. Constance Penley (New York: Routledge, 1988), 104-40.

[70] Mary C. Kearney. Email to Hector Amaya. August 14, 2003.

[71] Ien Ang, *Watching* Dallas*: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1985).

[72] For more on Ang, see Thornham, *Passionate Detachments*, 77-82.

[73] Michelle Citron, Julia Lesage, Judith Mayne, B. Ruby Rich, Anna Marie Taylor, and The Editors of *New German Critique*, "Women and Film: A Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics," in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham (New York: New York University Press, 1999 [1978]), 115-21.

[74] B. Ruby Rich, "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism," in *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar and Janice R. Welsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 27-47.

[75] Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, 129.

[76] In addition to reception, Kuhn also highlighted production as a determining factor on the constitution of feminist film practices. Ibid., 176-196.

[77] Examples of this are the following: in literature, Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own : British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); in art, Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990); in film, Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*; in television, Annette Kuhn, "Women's Genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera, and Theory," *Screen* 25, no. 1 (1984): 18-28; Janet Staiger, "The Politics of Film Canons" [1985], in *Multiple Voices in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. Diane Carson, Linda Dittmar and Janice R. Welsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 201-202.

7

U.S. Reception of Cuban Film

Andrew Kopkind, writing for *The Nation* in 1985, wrote the following commentary:

> There were six showing of *Memories of Underdevelopment*, the classic chronicle of bourgeois alienation in revolutionary Cuba... This was not a rare event, and yet the theatre was packed for all performances. Since it was made… Tomas Gutierrez Alea's [sic] film has been staple fare for radical repertory and revolutionary retrospectives from Cambridge to Santa Cruz, and it is hard to imagine that anyone old enough to recognize the face of Che on a poster and honest enough to admit a romantic loyalty to Cuba does not have a functional acquaintance with it... The persistence of *Memories* in the consciousness of a political generation is like the permanence of a sacred text in the culture of a sect... The crowds that saw the movie that weekend at the Film Forum went to take part in a ritual that told them who they were or what they had been, which is not only a wonderful way to spend an hour in the dark but almost redeems the whole painful, extravagant and self-indulgent process of movie making.[1]

In this brief piece of writing, Kopkind manages to convey many of the reasons for the importance of researching the reception of Cuban film in the United States. Because of their origin (a revolutionary Third World nation) and their aesthetics, films like *Memories* became part of the experience of being a radical, a leftist, and a socially conscious American citizen. Their dialogue and scenes became part of the lore of political communities and attending their screenings rituals that celebrated the potential meaningfulness of cultural consumption.

As Kopkind implies, and as I suggested in the previous chapter, *Memories* and other foreign political films occupy unusual positions within the field of cultural

production in general and within the film industry in particular. Typically exhibited in special screenings, festivals, universities, and a few art-houses, the exhibition life of a political foreign film in America typically has been one of relative isolation. But several factors aid their exhibition: given the minuscule budgets for advertising that these movies have (often none), word of mouth becomes essential to their success. For this same reason, a critic like Kopkind can be key to attracting a sizable audience. Kopkind, who published in *The Nation*, a quite reputable liberal-leftist magazine of some prominence in the field of cultural production, for this very fact, had access to a segment of the public that was likely to be interested in a film from Cuba. A positive, or at least an intriguing, review from the likes of Kopkind had the potential to generate enough buzz to propel otherwise obscure films like *Memories* and *Up to a Certain Point* (another film reviewed by Kopkind) into relative commercial winners.

The critic's importance to the field of culture, and his/her power within the field, lies in her/his ability to influence the commercial survival of a cultural product. This happens because the critic mediates between the field and the larger *habitus* where a community, bound by a lifestyles, traditions, systems of taste, and political beliefs, awaits to participate in activities of the field. Other cultural workers perform similar mediating roles and their importance to the field is related to their economic roles. Film magazines and journals, because they reach festival organizers and art-house exhibitors, are also important to these films. Finally, and though I have not researched this at length, I have noticed that one of the exhibition venues of the Cuban films I am

researching is within university campuses (*One Way or Another* is a common film taught in feminist film classes), and it is thus reasonable to think that film scholars are important to this rarefied system of exhibition. Listed in levels of generality, in this chapter I comment on writings published in newspapers, mainstream magazines, cultural magazines, film magazines, non-academic film journals, and a couple of academic journals. Each mediates between the field of cultural production and different publics.

The cultural realm in the United States in the 1970s and the academic understanding of popular culture have combined to create categories of cultural jobs, including film and media criticism, that are at times political and politicized.[2] Either because cultural workers are aware they are providing a type of cultural literacy to their readers, such as the case of Stanley Kauffmann's take on the United States State Department and censorship or Kopkind's insightful reflection on political community, or because reviews and cultural commentaries directly addressed the politics of texts, such as the case of feminist reviews that commented on the ideology of patriarchy, cultural workers exist in politicized locations.

This is not to say that these cultural workers are capable of addressing film and other cultural expressions as ideology (cultural workers are "inside" ideology), as politics, and, in the case of foreign film, as international texts that require specific command of foreign histories and aesthetic traditions. Cultural workers occupy specific subject positions that, though politicized and at times counter-hegemonic, are

constituted in ideology and thus likely to rely on seemingly natural hermeneutic frameworks at the textual, contextual, and extra-textual levels. Some of the cultural repertoire from which cultural workers may draw were sketched in the previous chapter, including notions about the Cuban Revolution as well as ideas about foreign and political films. Thus, even when considered as politicized actions and existing within a tradition of practices of liberation, criticism is ideological in a way similar to practices such as boycotting, protesting, and lobbying.

This chapter examines the U.S. critical reception of *Memories of Underdevelopment*, *Lucia*, *One Way or Another*, *Portrait of Teresa*, and *Up to a Certain Point*. Since I am trying to address issues of identity and politics, I will pay particular attention to textual evidence of the separation between self and other such as comments about national identity and political affiliations. But in addition, I will also center in the application of aesthetic values to judge, explain, or frame the Cuban filmic texts. Aesthetic propositions and ideas play an important role in the shaping of cultural workers' identities. As in previous chapters, I will review the evidence also in relation to historical and cultural contexts.

My analysis is organized chronologically and thematically. The importance of abiding by chronology has to do with the way discourse changes over time through self-referentiality. Those in the professions of film criticism, interpretation, and commentary often read each other's works and writings and thus produce their own interpretations and commentaries partly in reaction or in support to already stated ideas. Moreover, the

dispersion of statements through time gives character to discursive systems and provides useful information on the changing meanings of filmic texts and events. The themes I find particularly useful have to do with communism, gender, foreign film, and ethnicity. These give clues to the way politicized identities rely on hermeneutic frameworks.

Memories of Underdevelopment

The fear of communism, nuclear destruction, and existing popular notions about Latin America and the Third World have shaped most Americans' conceptions about Cuba since the 1960s. In addition, the presence of autochthonous Cuban culture (except in music and, geographically, in Florida) in the United States was practically erased by the economic and cultural embargo placed on Cuba since the beginning of the 1960s. Except for the efforts of organizations such as the American Documentary Films (ADF), Cuban films were simply not available to most American audiences. Partly as a result of trade restrictions, but also as evidence of the strong antipathy many American government officials and authorities felt for communist Cuba, it took roughly fifteen years of waiting for revolutionary film from Cuba to be shown. Ironically, by the time this happened, revolutionary Cuban film had less of a chance to affect the identities of American radicals since the sixties had all but ended.

According to some estimates, in 1972 and 1973, except for feminism, political radicalism in America had been in retreat for a couple of years. As Todd Gitlin writes:

"A Harris poll reported the first drop since 1965 in the percentage of students calling themselves 'radical or far Left—from 11 percent in the spring of 1970 to 7 percent in the fall. From spring to fall, the middle-of-the-road category leaped from 26 to 34 percent, and the 'conservative' and 'far right' groups, which had been sliding steadily since 1968, from 15 to 19 percent."[3] If his interpretation of the data is correct, these changes in the articulated constitution of politicized groups and identities of the late 1960s marked the end of the era. If historians consider the 1960s as a period in American history characterized by political radicalism and dissention, the decade ended in 1972, when the last of the Movement's anti-war efforts secured national attention. In April 1971 the anti-war movement organized a march attended by half-million people, but by then, organized dissention had lost force. From 1970 to 1972, what was left of the Movement dwindled due to military de-escalation in Vietnam. Nixon was succeeding at containing discontent. Eventually, at the end of a year dominated by the Watergate Scandal, Nixon defeated the left. A second irony: the Movement's most symbolic victory, the Paris Accords of January 31, 1973, marked its end. Few celebrated (414.).

As already mentioned, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and *Memories* had been denied a place in 1972 in the U.S. cultural field. The field of power, too strong, delayed such an arrival until 1973, after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, when the U.S. Government finally allowed the distribution of the film. Tricontinental Film Center brought the film to the United States and, aware of Americans' lack of knowledge regarding Cuban film

and the revolution, offered to provide speakers to those interested in exhibiting it.[4] The First Avenue Screening Room in New York and the Rugoff Theater were the first to show *Memories* in May 1973. A flurry of reviews followed these first showings, and, predictably, they were published in some of the most traditionally liberal and leftist media and specialized journals including *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, *Village Voice*, *Jump Cut*, and *Cineaste*.

Kauffmann, one of the signers of the "Letter to the Editors"[5] and one of the most prestigious literary and film critics of the time, reviewed *Memories* for *The New Republic*.[6] Kauffman, who has been a critic for reputable cultural magazines since 1958, is part of a group of critics (e.g., Pauline Kael, Andrew Sarris) that emerged during the time that American film was considered to be sub par to European film.[7] Kauffmann's opinions of the French new wave and the great Italian, Scandinavian, and Japanese directors of the 1960s and 1970s shaped his career and reputation.[8] His background was drama and thus his reviews excelled at analyzing performance and the aesthetics of film. Unlike Sarris, who early embraced auteur theory, and Kael, who admired film as popular culture, Kauffman's work was that of an aesthete, knowledgeable and elitist, though clearly liberal, just like *The New Republic*.[9]

Kauffmann's review was relevant to the reception of *Memories* and of Cuban film in general in several ways. It was the first review of a Cuban film in a popular magazine and thus set a standard interpretation, and, given his prestige and that of his magazine, future reviewers would be beholden to read it and acknowledge it.[10] Second, his review

was politicized in several ways. Printed right after a review of a book that criticized the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the cases of censorship and repression sponsored by that government entity, Kauffmann's review begins with a paragraph about the censoring and repression of the Cuban Film Festival in New York by the State Department. From then on, Kauffmann is not only reviewing the film but also evaluating the American government's actions, and he does his evaluation through the aesthetic appreciation and interpretation of the film.

His criticism of the field of power is performed through the vindication of *Memories* as a rich text that embodies some of the best qualities of cinema of the time. He states: "This is an extraordinarily sensible piece of work—exactly the opposite of the gung-ho stuff one might expect from a newly organized government."[11] Such praise discredits those who, like people in the State Department, probably assumed that film from a communist nation is de facto propaganda. He continues describing the film as "tactful" and directed with skill and links its thematic and aesthetic propositions to a celebrated film director; commenting about Sergio, *Memories*'s protagonist, he writes: "[What] the film gives us is an Antonioni character in the middle of a political revolution" (32). He finishes his review with his strongest argument in favor of the film, one that can be read as directed to the field of power: "Out of a revolution bred on slogans comes a film without answers: thus lending some credibility to the revolution" (32).

That Kauffmann uses cultural criticism to oppose the censoring activities of the State Department suggests that his review can also be seen as Kauffmann's attempt at demarcating his position in the cultural field and (against) the power structure. Since cultural rights (including cultural freedoms) are central to the American cultural *habitus* (much in the same way that civic responsibility plays a key role in the Cuban *habitus*), Kauffmann's defense and praise of *Memories* has a dual register: on the one hand, it can be interpreted as an institutional activity that (re)asserts the cultural field's independence from the field of power. That is, *The New Republic* relies on the idea that cultural freedom is a right and that without it the magazine may not survive. Opposing the State Department's censoring hawks and praising a film like *Memories* become necessities (had *Memories* been "gun-ho propaganda," a very different tactic would have to be used to defend the cultural field's independence).

However, and as Bourdieu comments, cultural fields exist within the field of power and cannot fully oppose it. The language Kauffmann used in the review is evidence of this register. He begins his review stating that *Memories* is "exactly the opposite of gung-ho stuff one might expect from a newly organized government" and ends commenting how remarkable was that a "revolution bred on slogans" produced such subtle film. Though likely Kauffmann did not intend to argue that Cuban culture was only propaganda (he was probably being sarcastic), the two commentaries together reproduce stereotypical language regarding totalitarian nations (sarcasm relies on the reader's competence; without competence, sarcasm can easily turn into something else).

What did Kauffmann think of Cuba's culture? The information and the language used to present it do not yield much more.

Vincent Canby, writing for *The New York Times* the day after its opening on May 18, 1973, also set a standard for interpreting the film's unusual aesthetics. [12] Like Kauffmann, he praises the film using European standards of quality: "*Memories of Underdevelopment* is a fascinating achievement. Here is a film about alienation that is wise, sad, and often funny, and that never slips into the bored and boring attitudes that wreck Antonioni's later films" (22). Comparing Gutiérrez's style to European art-cinema, Canby suggests that Gutiérrez "is clearly a man, like Sergio, whose sensibilities are European" (22). Assuming their similarities, however, does not lead Canby to believe that Gutiérrez's film is anti-revolutionary. On the contrary, he states that this is an "essentially pro-revolutionary film in which Castro's revolution is observed through eyes dim with bafflement" (22). His political opinions are furthered evinced in the last paragraph of his review where he links, like Kauffmann, the film to the U.S. State Department's censorship.

Though Kauffmann and Canby are hardly reviewers that would set the standard for a Marxist critique of *Memories*, their prestige and timing, and the fact that they used already established frames of understanding things Cuban (communism, politics, Europeanized culture) made their reviews standard, particularly Kauffmann's; indeed, practically every reviewer took Kauffman's approach, placing the film within a political backdrop of censorship, and the U.S. Government versus communism. What the

reviewers brought to the reception was, however, quite diverse, though some patterns were discernable. One had to do with the reviewers' understanding of what Cuban film was or was supposed to be. A second pattern related to positive evaluations of the film based on the film's critical stance against the revolution. And the third was an acknowledgment of *Memories* as a text in the Marxist aesthetics' tradition.

If Kauffmann, a rather savvy and knowledgeable viewer, had expressed some surprise at the aesthetic and acting qualities of *Memories* (given that, apparently, the film belonged to the category of "films made by newly organized governments"), it is normal to find that other reviewers also found *Memories* an unexpectedly pleasant surprise that challenged stereotypical notions of communist culture—i.e., culture as propaganda. Peter Schjeldahl, of *The New York Times*, somehow naively states: "It is a miracle. It is also something of a shock. I'm not sure what I expected of my first exposure to postrevolutionary Cuban cinema; something raw and hortatory, probably."[13] Colin Westerback gives a clearer picture of the set of expectations when he writes: "Since history tells me that most revolutionaries are straight-laced and literal minded, it seemed surprising that this film …is not only ironical, but ribald. Nor can it be said…that the film suffers from the humorlessness typical of revolutionary art."[14]

These comments suggest that in 1973, American film critics, like most Americans, lacked exposure to culture from Cuba and that this knowledge gap had been defined ideologically. Without being openly anti-communist (though Westerback comes just short of stating his anti-communism), Schjedahl and Westerback managed

nonetheless to praise while criticizing. Like Kauffmann, their comments hit a double register that defines an institutional location in which their selves are manifested as independent, but also subject to power. Both reviewers can state, writing in the first person, that they have not seen other Cuban films; yet, they also confess that they went to the theater with strong expectations and that these, luckily, were not met. One senses an aesthetic and political parochialism in these two reviewers, particularly if we compare them with Kauffmann who, expertly, reminds the reader that other films from communist nations were comparable to *Memories* in their narrative subtlety and aesthetic propositions.[15] Schjedahl and Westerback also use extra-textual political information to interpret the film, in particular ideas about Cuba and about communist culture. In a way similar to the Cuban reviewers who used their own relation to the Cuban field of power to interpret the film, these American reviewers privileged the extra-textual over the textual and the political over the aesthetic. This is not to say that the aesthetic was dismissed but to say that the aesthetic was understood as containing political ideas and as having political implications. Schjedahl expressed these implications as follows: "Perhaps the jerrybuilt Cold War barriers between the United States and Cuba have now decayed to the point where a puff or two of fresh, humanizing air like that of *Memories* may help blow them down. Let's hope."[16] The aesthetic quality of the film is the humanizing air of hope.

In using political ideas as key expectations when viewing *Memories*, these reviewers were declaring that they engaged the text as political individuals, and, it can

be argued, that their reviews were political actions and public displays of selfhood. The reviews so far mentioned are written in the first person and contain more personal information about the reviewers than is normal. Schjedahl ends his with the personal statement: “Let’s hope.” Westerback confesses that most of his reviews are not satisfactory: “Should a critic stick to reviewing commercial films that he often considers schlock, but that are probably the only ones his readers will have a chance to see?” [17]

Memories was seen first through the eyes of power and politics and second as a text to be interpreted and aesthetically valued. Because of its contextual framework, and given the specific expectations regarding communist film in general and Cuban film in particular, these and other popular reviewers of *Memories* praised it. The exception was Robert Hatch who, in reviewing the film for *The Nation*, commented that exaggerating the praise for *Memories* based, partly, on the size of the Cuban nation and possibly on the fact that the United States bullied Cuba for the last decade was patronizing to Gutiérrez. [18] From that position, Hatch constructed a negative critique of *Memories* where he explored his antipathy for European art film, which Hatch uses as a framework to see *Memories*. This antipathy is evident in the sarcastic tone of his writing: “As is custom in pictures that explore the spiritual doubts of modern youth, Sergio is much given to solitary walking and prone sprawling on unmade beds” (764).

His review also shows some questions, expressed in a politically and/or ethnically ambiguous way, regarding the realism of the film: “I’m not convinced that [the film] reflects the morale of Cuba in those days. Pampered and broody young men who find

themselves insufficiently challenged by their surroundings are not confined to island countries in the process of revolution" (765). Hatch is suggesting that it is unlikely that a Sergio could be found in the Cuba of the time. "I was unhappily conscious," he continues, "as I watched the picture, that I was seeing almost nothing of Castro's Havana" (765). Besides an unlikely protagonist, the images seem to betray Hatch's expectations of place. One sentence later, he gives a clue as to what he thinks is being represented: "The cameras could as well have been shooting somewhere in the outer reaches of Queens" (765). These sentences do not mean that Hatch thinks the film is about Queens; however, they imply that Sergio is not only out of place in the diegetic world the film constructs, but also that the fictive world is unrealistic.

I believe that two possible explanations exist for Hatch's comments. The first is that Hatch believes that *Memories* is too "depressing," as he calls it, to represent the jubilant first years of the Revolution. Thus, Sergio is too moody and logically out of place. "Castro's Havana" would then be a place of action, not broodiness. And, finally, suggesting the film looks like the "outer reaches of Queens," a relatively underprivileged area of New York City, is a way of implying that such type of disenfranchisement was not common in Castro's Havana in 1962. The second explanation is that Hatch believes that "Castro's Havana" is a place where action had overtaken thought and reflection. Thus, Sergio's broodiness, a type of morose intellectuality, would seem out of place and unrealistic. His reference to Queens could then possibly mean that the film avoided representing Havana as a Third World city,

and, instead, overplayed its Westernized aspects so that Sergio would seem more in place. The first option would make the film "depressing" to a pro-Cuba, leftist viewer interested in seeing more of Castro's world, and given the ideological leanings of *The Nation*'s readership, I am inclined to think this one is true. The second explanation would make the film "depressing" to an anti-Cuba viewer interested in watching a more realistic film about intellectuality pushed aside by dogma.

That Hatch was ambiguous about what he meant reconstitutes the potential duality found in previous reviews. As importantly, this duality is not simply an ambivalence of intent (i.e., there is no evidence that Hatch was trying to leave his sentences open to "please" more readers), but seems to be part of the discourses of politics and aesthetics used to address *Memories*. For instance, Hatch writes at the beginning of the review that "Castro's government seized control" of Cuba. Hatch's language is negative in that it implies that Castro took control in a forceful fashion, where force connotes coercion or illegality. In the next sentence Hatch changes the negative tone and writes: "Cuba is a small state going through a critical period of renewal" (764). Paradoxically, Cuba's renewal is due to Castro's forceful empowerment. The redeeming qualities of Cuba, however, may not only relate to what the Revolution had accomplished socially. This ambivalence is also due to the political identity of the writer as it is constituted in relation to the U.S. field of power. Empathizing with Cuba and critical of the United States, Hatch points out that Cuba is "being bullied by its huge neighbor" (764). Like Kauffmann, Hatch's engagement with

Cuba is colored by his critical relationship with the field of power. Moreover, in performing his work as a critic he separates himself and the cultural location he inhabits from power, thus enabling me to talk about it as a practice of freedom.

Kauffmann, Schjedahl, and Westerback praised *Memories* but did so in ways that served their selves. These and other reviewers gave praise to those elements of the film that they interpreted as critiques of Castro's communist, revolutionary, police, and/or underdeveloped regime. Steve Hogner, writing for the *Austin American Statesman*, commented that the film "underscores much of the bitterness and resentment of a nation."[19] Taking at face value Sergio's comments on Cuba and Cubans, Hogner invests his interpretation of the narrative with his desire to see a counter-hegemonic text, and sure enough, he found it. For instance, Gutiérrez's representation of the Bay of Pigs was, according to Hogner, "a warning and the beginnings of an international chess match where Cuba is the loser" (ibid.). From this interpretive framework, Hogner can turn around and voice his own ethnocentric and racist prejudices and claim that it was Gutiérrez or Sergio who uttered them. For instance, his view was that Sergio was a symbol that Gutiérrez used to say to the world and to Cuba that "this particular nation [Cuba] continues to go on its own incessant stupidity" (ibid.). [20] Similarly, Sarris, the renowned film critic and chairman of the National Society of Film Critics (NSFC), commented that the reason the NSFC had awarded $2000 to Gutiérrez was due to the film's ability to present the "very personal and very courageous confrontation of the artist's doubts and ambivalences regarding the Cuban Revolution."[21] Similarly, David

Elliott wrote for the *Sun-Times* (Chicago) that "the film is *too* good for a society that still muscles its people with prisons, propaganda and mini-Vietnams in Africa."[22]

The U.S. field of culture, is, however, complex and allows for the existence of a diverse array of critical positions. The reviewers just mentioned occupied a distinctive space from where they wrote for a liberal and moderate-leftist public. In this space, the idea of Cuba and the meaning of things Cuban could better circulate if they were mixed with liberal values. That a Cuban film was praised for its courage to oppose its centralized, socialist, and even coercive government evidences that Cuba's radicalization has been presented in an unpalatable way to most Americans. That *Memories* was critical was also proof that it was "free" in a liberal sense, free to express and to experiment with aesthetics, free to communicate what maybe was silenced.

Other cultural workers, occupying different critical positions, understood that most reviewers' willingness to accept the film depended on the reviewer's perception of the film as anti-Castroist. Julianne Burton, an academic film critic who specializes in Cuba and Latin American film, was quite disappointed with the "sophisticated circles in this country," which likely included the reviewers and readers of *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation*.[23] She criticized their willingness to embrace the "familiar motifs of political and cultural alienation…The film," she continued, "is viewed as openly critical of the current Cuban regime, but its impassioned denunciation of pre-revolutionary Cuba goes either unperceived or uncommented in this country" (16). In a similar vein, Enrique Fernández (an academically trained Cuban American

writer who publishes about Cuban film) writes that "Naively, [liberal Americans] had interpreted the cynicism of the narrator/protagonist as Gutiérrez's, forgetting that while this character amuses himself with an anatomy of the Cuban scene, the film is busily dissecting him."[24] This inability of liberal Americans to "see" the narrational point of view of *Memories* was rooted, according to both Burton and Fernández, in the liberal critics' hermeneutic frameworks labeled as either naive or ignorant of quite basic Marxist aesthetic principles, chiefly, dialectics.

The rift between these two sets of critics is one formed by the convergence of aesthetic understanding, political beliefs and ideologies, and hermeneutic tactics. Yet, they disputed not simply a proper interpretation but also the rhetorical tactics used to make this interpretation persuasive and "tasteful" to readers. As David Bordwell comments, the social character of film criticism makes it a ritual where critics and audiences enact ideological dispositions.[25] The communicative and rhetoric links of critic and reader can be established in different ways.[26] In seeing *Memories* as a courageous political text, the first set of reviewers used ethical and emotional arguments to produce a rhetorical link to liberal audiences (liberal even when leftist). This "communion" between reader and critic, a self-defining activity, can be seen also as a public (joint) declaration of faith on the power of art (film) to overcome ideology, on the power of speech to challenge oppression. Take Kauffmann who, again commenting on *Memories*, wrote to this effect and stated that the film's artistic merit rested on its ability to conceal the director's opinions, which in the case of *Memories* meant hiding

its candid questioning of the changes in Cuban society.[27] The communion also relies on the negation of the other and in the case of the reviewers just mentioned, the other is represented by Cuba's police state (Kauffmann), centralized government, and Cuba's communist-socialist society (Hogner and Westerback).

At least some of Burton's and Fernández's complains were issued to the other critics' rhetorical use of ethical arguments to explain the aesthetic quality of the film. According to Burton and Fernández, ethical issues had distorted the critics' perceptual apparatus. To correct the ideological bias, they both suggested the application of more strict hermeneutic techniques, more specifically, Marxist aesthetics. But this is, of course, a rhetorical strategy aiming at validating an interpretation. Moreover, this strategy is also issued in the name of ethics and as an appeal to a community of readers that is less likely to believe that Cuba should be characterized as a police-state and that cultural works from Cuba should only be measured in relation to their ideological underpinnings.

Burton and Fernández specialized in Latin American film and constructed positions within the field from which they could exercise a leftist optic and perform their jobs from a cultural location different from liberal critics. Both were trained as critics within the changing university world where subjugated knowledges, including political and aesthetic approaches, were ways of countering at least some of the power of hegemony in the United States. From that vantage, they perceived the field differently from liberal critics and thus criticized the critics' shortcomings. They did so

without making reference to the superiority of leftist ideology, a rhetorical strategy that would be perceived as simply ideological-ethical, but by making reference to proper techniques of interpretation.

The application of Marxist aesthetics as a hermeneutic technique to interpret *Memories* resulted on an emphasis on those elements of the narrative that could be seen as dialectical. Instead of centering on Sergio's opinions about Cuba and his optic of disillusionment, a U.S. Marxist interpretation highlighted formal and narrative contrasts and the use of contradictory levels of reality. For Burton, *Memories* is "perhaps the most masterful elaboration to date of film's capacity to convey the dialectical interaction between historical circumstance and individual consciousness."[28] Also centering in dialectics, Fernández pointed out that intrinsic to the film's rich textuality is the interplay of "identification and alienation, the legacy of two great theorists of materialist aesthetics: Eisenstein and Brecht."[29]

William Alexander also uses Marxist aesthetic theory to talk about the film, but instead of relating it to Westernized narrative techniques, he uses the vocabulary of Third Cinema as a theoretical and hermeneutic framework.[30] Alexander places *Memories* in the Third Cinema tradition chiefly by arguing that the film has decolonizing power. Evidence of this is Sergio, a most apathetic hero, who is a character who needs decolonizing. More importantly, for Alexander, *Memories* is a prime example of Third Cinema because it attempts to decolonize the viewer by inviting him/her into a narrative that uses Second-Cinema aesthetics (European art

cinema) and a Second-Cinema typical character (Sergio's morose introspection is all too familiar in European art films) and then shows how this aesthetics and the subject position it invites can only produce isolation from revolutionary processes. "Here then is one use of film language for empowerment, for changing some spectators into actors in the revolution, and for further isolating those who will not change" (45).

Alexander's comments partly explain why critics commonly compared *Memories* to European art film and literature. Kauffmann had already written on Gutiérrez's training at the Centro Sperimentali di Roma. Schjeldahl, Fernández, and Lillian Gerard found the film reminiscent of Jean-Luc Godard's work. Described by reviewers not familiar with Cuban film as "artsy," "fancy," and "art film" some reviewers interpreted *Memories* through the code of "foreign European art film" and thus understood it as a subjective attack on social and political mores. That *Memories* was coming from Cuba, a nation in the process of revolution, could only mean, to these group of writers, that the film was indeed attacking social and political mores in Cuba. Such an interpretation had the advantage of belatedly negating aesthetic traditions rooted in socialist and communist nations and thus supporting the liberal notion that art could only be an expression of the autonomy of the artist and of the autonomy of the cultural field, a view central to the American cultural field (see Chapter 2).

Some reviewers went beyond recognizing *Memories* as aesthetically indebted to European film; they went as far as claiming the film's setting was or resembled Europe of the United States. Schjeldahl claimed that *Memories'*s Havana looked like

Amsterdam. Following suit, Hatch wrote, as repeated above: "I was unhappily conscious, as I watched the picture, that I was seeing almost nothing of Castro's Havana. The cameras could as well have been shooting somewhere in the outer reaches of Queens."[31] Sergio's physical surroundings (e.g., his condominium, which is also coded as European) heightened this perception of location and, together with the alienating point of view the film invites the viewer to take, assured many reviewers they were watching a European criticizing, rightly so, an underdeveloped society. Another example, John Hartl of *The Seattle Times*, writes how Sergio's perspective is reflecting on the way "the old Havana seems to disintegrate around him."[32]

Returning to Alexander, the distance that many reviewers recognized between Sergio and Cuban society, a distance nurtured by Europeanized ideas and that some reviewers linked to Gutiérrez's construction of space (e.g., Amsterdam, Queens, disintegrating Havana), is, Alexander believes, a Second-Cinema tactic of alienation.[33] Sergio *is* a critic of society presented through an art-cinema aesthetic. However, he also argues that recognizing Sergio's critical stance (and thus Second Cinema) is only one step in the application of the proper hermeneutic technique. A second step, which Alexander thinks is essential for learning of the director's aesthetic and ethical intentions, involves recognizing that identifying with Sergio's stance is identifying with a "rapist" (who applied a type of cultural coercion to abuse Elena), a "racist" (this is evidenced in the way Sergio talks about Afro-Cuban women and in Sergio's libidinal obsession with blonds), and a "murderer" (this because Sergio just stands still while a

counter-revolutionary assassination takes place). This second step is one that the viewer takes to decolonize himself/herself from Western myths of underdevelopment and from Second Cinema. Alexander, agreeing with Burton and Fernández, observes that U.S. reviewers rarely took that second step; thus, they remained identified with Sergio's rapist, racist, and murdering position.

Those reviewers who found European analogies for *Memories* and those who saw it as a critic of the Revolution (at least of its coercive aspects) enacted a disposition to perceive filmic value by applying ethnocentric standards. Those leftist reviewers who saw it as an example of Third Cinema or Marxist aesthetics enacted also a disposition to perceive filmic value by reference to an anti-Western political stance. That these two positions were the most common in the United States explain why *Memories* became a critical favorite. Not surprisingly, "*Take One* magazine conducted a poll of prominent film critics that ended with the nearly unanimous choice of *Memories* as the best Third World movie of the past decade"[34]

The critical reception of *Memories* began the tradition of politicizing Cuban film. Given that censorship had affected the film's distribution, several reviewers, opponents of censorship, gave *Memories* praise and criticized the State Department for its actions. Even in some of these cases, however, reviewers expressed surprise at its quality and subtlety. Underscoring this surprise was a tendency to reduce Cuba's revolutionary government to a police-state, a reduction brokered by the American Government's economic and cultural embargo.

The U.S. cultural field is nonetheless complex and allows for a diversity of cultural locations from where institutions and cultural workers struggle over interpretation. Reviewers writing from one of these locations used U.S.-based Marxist aesthetics to put forward interpretations that criticized the U.S. field of power and what they perceive to be that field's influence over culture: according to these interpretations, most U.S. critics responded to *Memories* based on hegemonic ideas about politics that are complicit with the field of power. Also significant is that each of these reviewers prescribed a type of hermeneutics and insisted that without recourse to Marxist aesthetics, dialectics, and/or Third Cinema aesthetic, interpretations would be improper, ideological, and incorrect.

Lucia

Like *Memories*, the political interference of the State Department in the First New York Cuban Film Festival in March 1972 affected the critical reception of *Lucia*. It was during the screening of *Lucia*, the only film shown during the festival, when anti-Castro activists released white mice to disrupt the screening. The next day's press commented on the event's unusual conditions of exhibition and failed to review the film. Since the State Department shut down the festival during that evening, audiences never saw *Lucia* in a full and uninterrupted fashion until March 1974.[35]

From 1973, when Michael Myerson released the book *Memories of Underdevelopment: The Revolutionary Films of Cuba* in which he wrote an extensive

interpretation of *Lucia*, until 1985, when the film was included in the *Magill's Survey of Cinema*, those commenting on the film were: in March 1974, Nora Sayre in *The New York Times*, Molly Haskell in *The Village Voice*, Robert Hatch in *The Nation*; in April 1974, Penelope Gilliat in *The New Yorker*; Meg Matthews in *Films in Review*; Westerback in *Commonweal*; in July 1974, Peter Biskind in *Jump Cut*; in 1975, Ana Marie Taylor in *Film Quarterly*; in 1976, Julianne Burton in *The San Francisco Examiner*; in 1978, John Mraz and Marta Alvear, each with a different piece in *Jump Cut*; in 1980, Marjorie Rosen in *Ms*.; and Peter Rist in 1985 in *Magill's Survey of Cinema*.[36] These reviews include liberal papers and magazines, as well as specialized film media.

Despite playing such prominent roles in political struggles, and unlike *Memories*, the discourses of censorship and communism were not strong frameworks for the interpretation of *Lucia*. Because *Memories* had set a precedent for Cuban film, because *Lucia* was reviewed mostly in specialized magazines and journals, and because the film dealt with the theme of gender relations, a theme that in 1974 was common in U.S. public culture, the film was interpreted mostly in relation to its textual characteristics, such as aesthetics, representation of women, and genre. This is not to say that communism (or Marxism) and ethnocentrism were not important themes in the reviews; like in *Memories*, these two themes helped framed the expectations regarding aesthetic, gender representation, and genre.

Allusions to communism and Marxism were common in the reviews and interpretations of *Lucia*. But it is important to comment on the marked differences in the way that communism and Marxism were used to understand and interpret the film. While in *Memories* often these notions were used to criticize Cuba's political system, in *Lucia*, similar concepts and their uses hinted of sympathies towards Cuba and its political ideatic systems. Instead of being surprised at the quality and courageousness of the film, the reviewers employed Marxist terminology to understand and to praise the textual characteristics of the film.

Characters and situations are described using Marxist terminology. For instance, several writers allude to the conflicts in which the Lucías were involved in terms of class and social struggles. Myerson sees each Lucía as the representative of a class: Lucía in 1895 belonged to the "landowning class whose national interests gave rise to the independence movement against Spain."[37] Lucía in 1932 represented the petit bourgeoisie of the business class in Cuba. Lucía in the 1960s was the working class. Sayre, Haskell, Biskind, and Matthews in 1974 and Rosen and Rist in the 1980s also characterize the characters based on the class of each Lucía. When seen through the eyes of class, *Lucia* becomes a statement about the development of historically situated subjectivities as they are determined by class. Biskind describes Lucía in 1895 as a victim to the class and gender conventions of the time. Fearful of remaining a spinster, "She abandons herself to a grand passion, to a myth of romantic self-fulfillment…which

is derivative in its way of a bygone Byronism, as the finery of her class is imitative of Paris fashions."[38]

Sayre, Haskell, Myerson, Biskind, Rose, and Rist use class in two ways: first, class is, according to them, a unifying logic that brought together the three parts of *Lucia*. It did so by providing a common rationale for character behavior and relationships among characters in each of the segments. The clearest examples of this have to do with the behavior exhibited by the Lucías and their male partners. In 1895, Myerson writes, Lucía belonged to the class that promoted the revolution against Spain, and she behaved accordingly. [39] For instance, with her friends, Lucía helped produce uniforms for the revolutionary army, to which her brother belonged. In 1932, Biskind suggests, Lucía's reaction against her comfortable yet banal bourgeois status was the background for her adventures with Aldo, her revolutionary lover. [40] In the 1960s, Lucía's peasant background explained both her illiteracy and her desire to be a hard worker for the Revolution. In each of these cases, class determines the way the Lucías relate to social structures. This is not to say that the characters are perceived to be one-dimensional and facile. Except for Matthews, in these leftist reviews *Lucia*'s representation of subjectivities is explained as fragmented and thus likely to occupy conflicting and even contradictory social spaces. As Myerson points out, "Lucia 1895" belonged to the class that promoted the Spanish revolution, yet Lucía inhabited class and gender systems that made her prone to, as Biskind suggests, romantic passions and catastrophic decisions. Biskind also comments on "Lucia 1932" as a paradoxical

character on the one hand motivated to action by a desire for liberation; on the other hand, she consistently allowed Aldo, her male partner, to do the talking, the fighting, and the dying. In Tomás, the husband of Lucía in the 1960s, Biskind also finds contradictions, for this character was incapable of addressing the impossibility of simultaneously being a revolutionary and a chauvinist male.

Besides explaining character motivation, focusing on class allows the reviewers to put to use knowledge and/or assumptions concerning the passing of history. Regarding "Lucia 1895," Myerson describes the Spanish colony as under the threat of the Cuban landowning class.[41] Biskind sees in "Lucia 1932" a story of social transformation initiated by a progressive bourgeoisie.[42] Rist and Rosen interpret the third segment as a struggle in which the women as a class were attempting to gain emancipation from patriarchy.[43] In each of these reviews, economic and gender-based class categories underscore the reviewer's leftist tendency to believe that a film out of Cuba would present historical change as the result of collective or class action engendered within oppressive economic and ideological structures. Such tendency is in opposition to the liberal and conservative custom of narrativizing and interpreting history in terms of the moral and heroic deeds of individuals.

Indeed, several reviewers find in *Lucia* the opposite of a liberal hero: the deeds of individuals, however heroic, are presented as the products of the types of consciousness available to them in that particular historic time. According to Westerback, the film shows how "history raises the level of consciousness and makes revolution

inevitable."[44] The relationship between self and history was thus, Biskind comments, one of the themes that the film explores. "Each Lucía is the locus of intersection between large social changes and sharply perceived personal needs. Each makes choices whose sources are at once public and private."[45] The viewer was thus taught a lesson on Marxist historiography by showing the futility of trying to evade history and take refuge in the self. Besides historiography, Mraz suggests that the viewer of *Lucia* is also given a lesson in Marxist aesthetics. This was so because *Lucia* explored the interconnection of perception and history.[46] In an attempt to represent the different ways in which different characters perceived reality in different periods, Mraz argues that Solás strategically used "conflicting visual styles." For Cuban filmmakers, perception was, Mraz comments, "an expression of an individual's historical context" (21).

Because of the possibility of using class and collective action to describe the narratives that formed *Lucia*, some writers hailed the film as a clearly Marxist text that, at best, represented the product of a vital society where history could be presented in an open-ended and progressive form.[47] At worst, Hatch commented (using what it sounds like a liberal critique of Marxism), the film showed an awareness of its didactic goal and this threatened its overall depiction of human nature.[48]

In using select Marxist ideas to interpret this film, some of these writers enacted hermeneutical dispositions based on leftist political identities. It is important to observe that these cultural workers were able to use leftist interpretational tools without resorting to ambivalence or ambiguity. I believe this was possible because the type of

media outlets in which they published welcomed leftist and academic approaches to interpretation. Within the filmic world, media like *Jump Cut* and *Cineaste* occupy a leftist axis and, from there, these journals typically issue cultural critiques the field of power and the entertainment industry.

Other non-leftist reviewers, including Hatch, Westerback, and Stark, enacted their own dispositions by interpreting the film as an exploration of three historical periods or of the gender system in three epochs. My intention is not to invalidate these interpretations, but to highlight the relationship of political identity to hermeneutics that is evident in all of the reviewers' work.

Several writers interpreted *Lucia* using Marxist tropes and leftist ideologies, but even more common were interpretive tactics associated with feminist criticism. Because *Lucia* had female central characters in each of the three segments, it was easy for American reviewers to associate the narratives with women's lives, the system of gender, patriarchy, and women's participation in history. As commented in the previous chapter, these elements had been part of feminist criticism since Kate Miller's *Sexual Politics*.[49] However, simply using some of these elements has never amounted to feminist criticism. In fact, the reviewers of *Lucia* used a significant degree of latitude in the application of these ideas. Three main styles of gendered reviewing are evident: The first interprets women's lives and gender oppression through the framework of Marxism. The second is non-committal in that it uses gender to criticize Cuba's communism but fails to bring complexity to its analysis of gender oppression. The third

style is women-centered and, in at least one of the reviews, embodies a significant amount of the hermeneutic principles of feminism.

Myerson, Biskind, and Rist offer three clear examples of Marxist feminist interpretation. Each shows sympathies for the struggles of women under patriarchy but assumes that the Revolution and Marxism would provide solutions to the problem of gender. Myerson, given his familiarity with the Cuban Revolution, is able to present a brief history of women in Cuba. In it, he emphasizes the economic changes the Revolution brought to women.[50] The revolutionary government's empowerment of women, Myerson implies, served as the theme for *Lucia*. As commented before, Myerson uses several Marxist codes to interpret the film and explain the type of gender subjectivities presented in the narrative in terms of class oppression. He does not elaborate at all on the constitution of gender as a discreet system of oppression; instead, he comments on the social and economic oppression of women and on masculinity. This was particularly evident in his interpretation of "Lucia 1932" and "Lucia 196…" In both cases he spends as much or more time talking about the male characters and these characters' relationships to the revolutions (the 1898, 1932, and 1959 revolutions) than talking about the Lucías (118-121). Ultimately, Myerson implies that, according to "Lucia 1932," gender mores are more ingrained than social mores but that both were intertwined. Moreover, the solutions to gender inequalities depend, he argues regarding "Lucia 196…," on the transformations facilitated by the Revolution. It is the Revolution that can transform Lucia's husband, Tomás. In interpreting the narrative in this way,

Myerson is not very different from the Cubans' interpretation of the film and the Cubans' reliance on Engel's theories of gender. Myerson indeed relies on a notion of gender based on economic oppression and his interpretation strongly implies that gender oppression is only a manifestation of class oppression.

Biskind, echoing Myerson, interprets the film by blending Marxist and feminist concerns. In describing the film, he argues that each segment "chronicles a stage in a three-fold struggle: for the personal liberation of the individuals from restrictive roles imposed by class and sex, for the decolonization and transformation of Cuba, and for an authentic national film style free from the models imposed by Western cultural colonialism, and adequate to render the reality of the new Cuba."[51] Because of the blending of class and sex, the Lucías struggle in their quest for self-fulfillment. In 1895, colonial Cuba, in all its romanticism, provides a context where the sexed subjectivity of Lucía is at odds with her political beliefs. This theme was repeated, according to Biskind, in 1932 and in the 1960s. In each case, Biskind finds that the gendered and sexual characteristics of the characters constitute the root of each of the characters' problems and ongoing proof that the self (because for Biskind the sex and gender systems are evidence of self) must be subsumed to public progressive structures, in particular, the revolutionary impulse. Writing about the characters, he states: "Each makes choices whose sources are at once public and private, but it is a testimony to the honesty of this film that political changes….are often more easily made than transformations of deeply ingrained cultural and social attitudes which directly oppress

individuals, especially women" (8). What Biskind implies is that if gender and sex are sources of oppression, then, they cannot be used for liberation. This is in contrast to the idea that the "personal is political" and thus the personal can be used to free women and men from social domination. Biskind's feminism is one infused with an old-style Marxism (not the New Left but the old Left) and thus at odds with 1970s feminisms. As commented in the past chapter, much feminist theory of this period proposes that gender and sex provide potentially liberatory elements and give women an epistemological point of view from which they could challenge social domination (see Chapter 6).

Rist, like Myerson and Biskind, displays a Marxist style of feminism where gender oppression is defined as a state of social underdevelopment. In his interpretation of the film, he quotes and approves of Humberto Solás who had stated that Lucía was not "a film about women, "but one about society."[52] Thus, Solás and Rist propose that women were used to expose general social repression. According to him, then, the film is not a feminist text but a Marxist and radical text that tried to show repression through history by exploring the development of gender in specific social settings.

Given that Biskind, Rist, and Myerson are quite complementary of the film, I can assume that they approve of the way *Lucia*, according to them, privileges class over gender. If this is so, these interpretations can be seen examples of political identities asserted through ambivalent interpretive tactics. These cultural workers seem to be drafting a space within the cultural field from where they can utter declarations of independence from the field of power. Yet, from this space they, or others, could issue

critiques of feminists who believe that gender and sex may be materially based but are uniquely constructed through history. For these feminists, among whom I include myself, privileging class over gender and sex is a dangerous political strategy because it can nullify the specificity of feminist claims.

Though some reviewers use some Marxism concepts and tools to tap into the narrative's potential, two reviewers interpreted the film as a narrative that ended up reducing Marxism to sex. In this regard, Westerback comments, in a neutral tone, on how the last segment of the film shows what the narrative proposes the revolution should be: "In effect this *is* the revolution. It is to give this girl the courage and the right to defy her husband that the other Lucías suffer violence, betrayal and bereavement."[53] The film, Westerback implies, has reduced the Revolution to a private struggle that attempts to challenge ways of being gendered and sexed. This privileges the psychological aspects of social oppression and disregards the Marxist axiom that oppression is the appropriation of labor by all means including coercion and intimidation. Matthews, who did not share Westerback's neutral reaction to this aspect of the film, complained that in the film "Marxism working through history seems reduced to the struggle of a woman against the privileges of men."[54]

Finally, Hatch interprets the representation of gendered behavior and women in a way that shows some contempt for women. Lucía in 1895 is reduced to an unintelligent person who is easy prey to the Spanish suitor's deviance. Hatch prefers Lucía in 1932, yet, he establishes his relation to the character based on Lucía's physical appearance.

She is “luminous,” “small,” and able to portray a wide range of emotions “without hitting a false note.”[55] The descriptor “small” is quite telling of the type of femininity that Hatch finds appropriate. The mulatto Adela Legrá, who stars as the last Lucía, and the older Raquel Revuelta, protagonist in the first, did not fit the racial and age ideal, and their acting abilities were questioned partly because of this. Hatch also criticized the film for the highly dramatic tone of “Lucia 1895.” According to him, “The emotional highjinks that embellish this tale are so counterproductive that the audience guffaws during moments of the most graphically portrayed spiritual torment” (350). His criticism was for Solás, for not being able to imagine high drama during the late 1800s. However, Hatch’s own commentaries seemed to originate from an Anglo-centric perspective that imagines all nineteenth- and twentieth-century romanticism to be British and not the Latin American or Spanish romanticism and that imagines the use of melodrama to be always retrograde. Benito Pérez Galdos, the Spanish author, and Alejo Carpentier, the Cuban novelist, are clear examples of the type of Baroque romantic style that could be proper to Spanish-ruled Cuba. Moreover, as Ana López has argued, New Latin American Cinema has embraced melodrama as a way at facilitating the critical apprehension of narratives by the general public.[56]

Contrary to all the previous reviews, five reviewers began and finished their reviews with women’s issues. However, they did this in quite different ways. Stark provides a reading of *Lucia* that reduces the film to three love stories.[57] In clear opposition to Hatch, who dislikes the first Lucía for its overdramatic tone, Stark prefers

that segment for the same reasons that Hatch dislikes it. The director's take on drama was, she claims, "impressive" as was the acting. Moreover, Revuelta, Stark complementarily declared, was a "stunning figure of a woman."[58] Though defining *Lucia* as a triptic composed of three love stories hardly does justice to the film, compared to Stark's gendered taste, Hatch's taste borders on the chauvinist. However, that Revuelta is described firstly in relation to her physical appearance suggests that Stark was using a sexual system of interpretation where women's bodies, and not their ethical or intellectual characteristics, were at the center.

Gilliatt, writing in *The New Yorker*, also interprets the film in terms that highlight its romantic aspects, describing it in a manner that resembles a sarcastic fairy-tale.[59] "Lucia 1895" is, for instance, overwhelmed by a "handsome stranger" who can "obviously [feel] he can deal with her suffocating girlish confidences." "Lucia 1932" is also sarcastically described. The end of the review exemplifies this tone when she writes: "Love is betrayed because Aldo, Lucía, and unmet others are on their own in refusing to comply with the comfortable." "Lucia 196…" is "newly bedded" but not by the "handsome stranger" who "comes in with government approval," but by her jealous husband.

Lastly, Sayre, Haskell, and Rosen's reviews have a more clearly feminist approach to interpretation.[60] For Sayre, the "extraordinary" *Lucia* "focuses on three generations of women whose lives reflect the society around them." For Rosen, the film is a "woman's picture" that "attempts a virtually impossible task—to artistically

integrate its heroines' emotional lives with the political fabric in which they live." For Haskell, the film is the first "goshamamy feminist film in 1974."[61]

These writers are not interested in simplistically celebrating the film; in fact, they are quite critical of the way the Lucías were represented. Rosen observes, cynically, how, for instance, Lucía in 1895 is fooled by her suitor when "she agrees to rendezvous at a coffee plantation which is—whoops—the guerrilla hideout; his deception and everyone's tragedy follow."[62] She is also dissatisfied with the second segment, a story that portrayed Lucía always physically and ideologically following her partner, Aldo. According to Rosen, Lucía is never aware of her powerlessness until Aldo is killed and Solás's open conclusion only adds to the uncertainty as to whether she will continue to be political or not. For Haskell, Lucía 1985 is "apparently rendered even more useless (Marxism or Sexism?) by the absence of men who are off fighting Spain." Sayre comments of the same segment that "The women have been directed to flutter and squeal until they appear like a parody of winsome maidenhood."[63]

What makes Rosen's, Haskell's, and Sayre's (though the later to a lesser extent) reviews a different brand of feminism from that previously commented on is their political radicalism. The film is measured against a set of political expectations central to which is the notion of an idealized feminist subject. Instead of criticizing *Lucia* for its inability to tell a cogent story, a valuation that Hatch used, these reviewers criticize it for the inability of the female characters to be freethinkers and for their tendencies to follow the men. They also clearly expect that the characters would be more reluctant to

abandon themselves to the system of gender, and they even wish the Lucías challenged prejudicial aspects of femininity. Rosen writes of "Lucia 1895" in a way that betrays her desire: "Lucia… makes blankets and shirts for her brother and other revolutionaries, but drops everything, even her discretion, when a suitor comes calling."[64] Femininity blocks Lucia's political commitment and, Rosen interprets, the system of gender has so weakened Lucía that she is incapable of having consistency of character; she drops everything to respond to the call of love. Rosen expresses a similar desire to see representations of women as agents when she comments of "Lucia 1932" : "Only with her husband's needless death does she, now pregnant, stumble into an awareness of her powerlessness" (29). Rosen uses the verb "stumble" to signal how little agency the film provides Lucia and how much historical events and social conventions direct the characters.

These reviews also signal a dissatisfaction with the film's representation of women and men, of the people. For instance, Haskell comments about the last segment: "Solas seems to say in the third segment, a low-comedy Punch and Judy parable about a jealous husband and sugar-cane cutting wife, for which the director attempts to fashion a popular, folkloric form, complete with jaunty, calypso song narration."[65] According to her, he fails and in the attempt, Solás produces a film that either condescendes or idealizes the "People."

These female reviewers' expectations, their desire to see characters that show the type of individualism that they embrace, do not stop them from clearly voicing their

support for the film. Like other feminist critics, Sayre, Haskell, and Rosen appreciate the fact that *Lucia* dealt with women's lives. But the reason they so complementarily label the film as "extraordinary," "goshamamy feminist film of 1974," or a "woman's picture" has more to do with the manner in which Solás represented the Lucías' subjection to the systems of gender and sex than with the fact that the film was composed of stories of women. "What Solás does display," Rosen reflects, "is compassion for their anguish, whether this anguish be in the (too-melodramatic) hysteria of Lucia I, … [sic] or in the pain working Lucia II's anxious, lovely face like a plow." Rosen also comments that Solás may have represented passive women, but at least their passivity "may be history's fault, not (just) his."[66] Haskell, though highly critical of the film, redeems Solás when she states that "he has a feeling for his heroines." Also, she comments, he restrained himself from filming voyeuristically the rape scene in "Lucia 1895," a feat, I presume, not normally achieved by male directors. Of "Lucia 196…," Sayre writes that "it's the best discussion of equality (and inequality) I've seen on screen." Though the three writers do not agree on the same points, the director's treatment of the characters and his willingness to represent them with compassion vindicates him.

Lucia was such a different film from *Memories* that it elicited quite different responses. Though criticizing Cuba was common in writings of *Memories*, *Lucia* was a clearly revolutionary film, and critics came to it with that knowledge and with more militant expectations. Some showed these expectations when they used Marxist

hermeneutic tropes to describe and interpret the film. These reviewers highlighted class and oppression as heuristic tropes and emphasized *Lucia* as a filmic text that presented specific Marxist ideas about history: to these reviewers, historical change was represented as the result of collective action.

Using gender and feminism as a way of accessing the film's narrative was also quite common. For instance, some reviewers used a mixture of Marxism and feminism. These reviewers claim the film argues that the problem of gender is one that could be solved with a Marxist revolution and the application of general principles of material egalitarianism. Gender, as a distinct system of subjection, was important in some other reviews and in these. In one of these reviews, the film becomes a triptic composed of three love stories. But another one embraces a more feminist stance and describes the characters, their motivations, and the general plot developments in relation to feminist standards. The Lucías, thus evaluated, were praised or criticized depending whether they showed women having characteristics such as intelligence, independence, and awareness of oppression. Moreover, these reviewers praised Solás for at least allowing the female characters to be presented as the product of history.

One Way or Another

The film *One Way or Another*, by Sara Gómez, was first shown in May 1978 at the New York Festival of Cuban Cinema and in Washington at the Key Theatre. Brief reviews in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* previewed the films to

readers and attempted to explain the revolutionary Cuban film tradition to American neophytes. Helped by the expertise of Santiago Alvarez, the famed documentarian and vice-president of the Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), who was accompanying the films through the festivals, the writers Michael Kernan and Tom Buckley (respectively) presented the case of a film industry that began from scratch in 1959 and that has followed at least some of the steps of Soviet cinema.[67]

Using the framework of Marxist aesthetics, Kernan identifies some of the formal and thematic characteristics that linked Cuban film to other socialist and communist filmic traditions. *Cantata de Chile*, a film directed by Solás, is compared to Soviet and Maoist visual styles and immediately after *One Way or Another* is succinctly described as showing "the impact of the revolution on the marginally indigent of Havana."[68] Like other reviewers before him, Kernan used communism to understand *One Way or Another*, but, also like other reviewers regarding other films, he insisted that Goméz's work was indeed different from the run-of-the-mill propaganda cinema that, it is implied, most communist nations produce. Given the film's storyline, he states: "It could be a tract, but it is not." And later he comments: "'Social consciousness' is an easy cliché, heard frequently in countries like Cuba. This picture makes the cant phrase into something real, the conflict between loyalty to a pal and loyalty to one's fellow workers" (ibid.). Such statements, that try to make exceptional specific Cuban films (in fact, each Cuban film is characterized as if it were the exception to the propaganda rule), evidenced the need to continue ideologically framing communism as a totalitarian

machine that, as a rule, relies on dogma, and produces only clichéd culture. Kernan, however liberal or even leftist he may be, seems unable to see the pattern that the films from Cuba (he mentions eight) have produced and, instead, comfortably insists that each is an exception.

This theme of attempting to understand specific Cuban films as unusual cultural productions is more common in non-specialized and mainstream press. Another instance is Robert W. Butler's 1983 review for *The Kansas City Star* that begins with the following: "Those who suspect that the Cuban film industry's sole output consists of documentaries about sugar-cane harvests and various Latin American liberation fronts may be somewhat comforted by *One Way or Another*…"[69] Butler is either unaware of Cuban film cultural production, or he is writing to a readership whose cultural expectations are predictably anti-Cuban. He is similar to Kernan when he criticizes the film for being "soft-core propaganda—in the sense that it toots the horn of the revolution and its role in knocking down cultural and class barriers" (ibid.). The mixing of sexual and political metaphors highlights the way morality structured the reception of the film's perceived political propositions. Presenting the revolution as something positive is an affront to Butler's sense of ethics, and thus the film is described as slightly ("soft-core"') offensive. One imagines that had the film dealt with sugar-cane, it would have been labeled "hard-core propaganda."

Butler also evaluated the aesthetics of the film and in doing so he applied western-Hollywood-centric standards of image and sound quality. "Technically," he writes, "the

film is fairly primitive, with grainy black-and-white photography and lots of incidental noises on the sound track" (ibid.). In his assessment of aesthetic quality, Butler is correct in recognizing unusual visual and sounds editing techniques, particularly if the norm is Hollywood. According to him, these characteristics mean that the film's aesthetics is "fairly primitive." However, the filmic qualities of *One Way or Another* are modeled after Third Cinema, which favors an aesthetics that García Espinoza had called "imperfect cinema."[70] Butler appears unaware of Third Cinema, and he certainly is willing to value this Cuban film based on the hegemonic aesthetics of Hollywood fare that typically include crisp image definition and fairly calculated and controlled sound editing. Such cinematic conventions are what Butler implies modern filmmaking should be. In this example, the relationship between the perceived quality of the film is woven with intercultural competence, and such a relation translates in a commentary that can be read as ethnocentric. The film, in its oddity, is labeled "primitive," not unprofessional, low budget, childish, gritty, rough, or even candid. These are all adjectives that Butler, for whatever reason, chose not to use and instead preferred the qualifier that more clearly described the difference between his modern standards and not-modern practices, the developed and the underdeveloped, the well-to-do and the deprived.

More specialized reviews of *One Way or Another* also picked up on these technical characteristics of the film. The difference is that for these commentators such aesthetics is precisely what placed the film among the most outstanding revolutionary

films of all times. Dennis West, a scholar who has written extensively on Cuban film, comments in 1985 that the Gómez's piece "represents a high point in ICAIC's efforts to decolonize Cuban cinema."[71] The process of decolonization that West refers to is closely related to what Butler described as "primitive": as West points out, Gómez used sixteen-millimeter film that was later blown up to thirty-five millimeter. West informs us that such a technique was used for several reasons, all related to the aesthetic statement the director attempted to make. The technique tried to facilitate natural acting by providing a non-obtrusive filming process (the size of a thirty-five millimeter camera was quite remarkable). That tactic was essential to invite good performances by the film's many non-professional actors. Non-professional actors were required because Gómez was interested in blending, and thus challenging, documentary and fictional cinematic forms. Moreover, because of its maneuverability, sixteen millimeter cameras were commonly used for documentaries which meant that if the fictional story was to blend with documentary, it needed to look grainy (2287).

Continuing the tradition of interpreting a Cuban film based on ethnocentric and Cold War stances, some of the mainstream reviewers used Western-centric standards and Hollywood aesthetics to measure the quality and to interpret the political signification of *One Way or Another*. Deemed as exceptional and unique, this Cuban film served as a platform for enacting an anti-Cuba discourse in which Cuba is reduced to a totalitarian regime. Like others before, these cultural workers manifested an ambivalent relation to the film and to Cuba. For instance, they defended Cuba against

some stereotypes (e.g., Butler begins his review pointing out that Cuba does not produce only sugar-cane harvest films) but did so in a way that denigrated the film (e.g., Kernan's insistence that several Cuban films are quite good, yet not the common output of the Cuban film industry). Only more specialized reviewers in film journals like *Cineaste* and *Jump Cut* address the type of aesthetics of the film used and the way political ideas were constructed. These writers used Third Cinema aesthetics as an interpretive framework.

Portrait of Teresa

Although *One Way or Another* dealt with issues of gender and sex, these frameworks were applied to its interpretation only sporadically. *Portrait of Teresa* (*Portrait* from here on), which so squarely tackled some of the problems of the gender and sex systems in Cuba, most importantly the double shift and the double standard, invited reviewers to use gender and sex as a fundamental interpretive framework. In what follows, I comment on how the reviews show a small array of the interpretive options for the film. From pro-feminist to pro-Cuba, the different ways in which *Portrait* was seen and understood signal hermeneutic and theoretical divisions among feminists.

In general, mainstream writers disliked or gave qualified praised to the film.[72] As in the previous films, discourses regarding the political system of Cuba and gender were often used as hermeneutic frameworks with gender being the most consistently present.

In particular the reviewers' language and interpretation of the narrative differed based on the sex of the reviewer, much in the same way it had happened in Cuba regarding *Lucia* and *Portrait*. Male reviewers adopted, more or less consistently, several identifiable traits: they used genre as a way of criticizing the film. They believed the plotline was predictable. They interpreted narrative facts in ways that questioned the ethical position of Teresa. And they gendered their descriptions of characters by referring to the female characters' physical appearance. The reviews by women in mainstream media showed a general empathy towards Teresa's character and were more likely to comment positively on the film's narrative and political features.

Variety, in their coverage of the Moscow Film Festival and the Chicago Film Festival in September and November 1979, respectively, first reviewed *Portrait of Teresa*.[73] These two early and brief commentaries on *Portrait* (the film was released the same year) continue evincing the importance of festivals to the distribution and exhibition of film from Cuba.[74] Like *Memories*, *Lucia*, and *One Way or Another*, this film relied on its ability to impress at least some festival organizers and audiences. These two early reviewers, however, were not very impressed.[75]

Mosk, a long-time reviewer for *Variety*, gives the film a questionable introduction by commenting in the first line of his review that *Portrait* "has the earmarks of a tv [sic] sitcom in its evasiveness of the more dramatic sides of female liberation coming to the Cuba of today."[76] Given that *Portrait* is meant to be a serious drama with a political and educational message, that it is called a sitcom is a heavy criticism, for it implies a level

of banality contrary to the filmmaker's goals.[77] It is not that Mosk is claiming that the film was funny or the issues laughable, but rather, one discovers later, that his enjoyment of this drama was made difficult by the acting and directing of the female character: "But Teresa is played in a too martyred way by Daysy Grandados [sic] and robs the film of a more discerning insight into this problem…".[78]

Mosk's unwillingness to consider Granados's acting as realistic may be more related to the genre of melodrama itself than to Granados's histrionics. Melodrama, a genre quite popular in Latin America[79] and also well received in the United States, is perceived as a genre targeted toward women.[80] Sege's review of *Portrait,* also in *Variety,* confirms this. Like Mosk (or because of Mosk, his coworker), Sege first describes the genre that the film seems to fit and uses genre expectations to dismiss the narrative style and realism of the film. "Except for a handful of scenes of telling verisimilitude…, it would be easy to dismiss Cuban director Pastor Vega's offering as a soap-opera melodrama with a feminist slant."[81] Though Sege tries to recuperate some of the film, by qualifying some elements of the narrative as "meticulously realistic," like Mosk, Sege uses a lexicon that leaves little doubt as to where he stands.[82]

Using genre to describe a film is always a way of asserting that the film's narrative movements, characters, and events have a predictable feeling. But most of the time, even when genre is invoked within a film review, the reviewer does not feel compelled to state that the film is predictable. However, Sege found it necessary to state it, and shortly after he also complained about the information the film delivered and the

rate of this delivery: “Director Vega and coscripter Ambrosio Fornet, unfortunately, unfold the domestic scrapping in exhaustive detail and without a proper sense of pacing” (ibid.). The adjective “predictable” is in this case closely related to the expression “exhaustive detail” and “sense of pacing.” The three are ways of describing a narrative that is, fundamentally, of little interest to a viewer. They are different ways of saying, “Just get it over with.” Sege suggests that he knew what was going to happen, that the narrative did not need such details (which ultimately were “exhausting”), and that the pace was slow.[83] This “soap-opera melodrama,” as Sege put it, simply did not hold his attention. And though Sege had earlier praised the narrative’s careful detail, at this point in the review details becomes a hindrance.

Hatch has a more subtle way of suggesting the film was predictable. He wrote for the *Nation*: “For all its excellence, *Portrait of Teresa* must be appreciated in context. Sexism has been in the North American consciousness for some time, and the film’s discovery and sometimes didactic explanation of the problem may seem naïve to viewers here. We are far from resolving the issue, but we know by heart how the argument goes.”[84] Hatch’s belief that the narrative deals with a problem that a U.S. viewer knows by heart and that the problem is presented in a didactic fashion suggests that watching the film can be a waste of time. This is so in spite of his opinion that the film is quite good and the acting extraordinary.

Another perspective about gender is found in the interpretation of the film’s end and the ensuing moral dilemma or lesson that the viewer is left pondering. In the course

of the film, Ramón becomes involved with a woman. Teresa finds out and in the final scene Ramón asks her to forgive him and take him back. She says "No," and asks him whether he would forgive her had she taken a lover. He answers, "It's not the same." Since the film is never clear whether Teresa had an affair with Tomás, her coworker, the viewer has to guess what happened. This guessing was typically done based on interpreting certain clues and giving them specific meanings. For instance, in one scene Teresa and Ramón are sitting quite close together watching the dance troupe that they co-direct. Ramón's arm rests on Teresa's back and she is smoking. Ramón, without asking, reaches over and takes her cigarette from her hand to take a puff. In the Cuban reviews, those (typically men) who believed that the couple had an illicit relationship used that scene as evidence of the affair. Those who believed that the affair never happened used more general cues, such as the lack of actual sexual contact between Tomás and Teresa.[85]

Mosk and Hatch believed Teresa had an affair, and they expressed this disbelief in a way that made ambiguous the film's ending. One must comment that other reviewers did not mention the final scene at all or, if they mentioned it, they believed that the film was addressing the double ethical standard (that the same sexual exploits by women and men will be judged differently).[86] In contrast, Hatch and Mosk give the ending an added layer of complexity by assuming that an easy moral resolution is impossible. Teresa and Ramón are, ultimately, wrong. For those who believed that Teresa had an affair but that the scene showed the double standard, the ethical resolution was clear: Teresa and

Ramón may be wrong in their actions, but only Ramón is guilty of applying and expecting the double standard. Optionally, to those who believed the affair between Tomás and Teresa did not happen, Ramón is simply mistaken, and his suggestion that a double standard should exist proves that Teresa's rejection of his request was right. Ramón is clearly wrong and morally inferior, for he not only is unable to remain faithful, but he still expects Teresa to take him back, even when he is incapable of hypothetically treating Teresa's infidelity in the way he is requesting to be treated.

Finally, another glimpse into the gendered point-of-view is Mosk's comment that the film's theme is "by now universal enough for the lingo circuit usage abroad." [87] That is, *Portrait*, despite its shortcomings (namely over-the-top acting and banality) is nonetheless good enough for a feminist or women's film festival circuit. Implied are sexist issues of quality and stereotypical ideas of women as audiences. In assuming that the film is proper for a type of exhibition that targets (mostly) women or feminists Mosk implies that such viewers may overlook overall film quality if the theme of the film uses the correct "lingo."

Sege goes beyond Mosk at hinting his gendering by embracing a sexed voyeurism. In his review, Sege comments on the physical attributes of two of the female characters but fails to address the physical presence of male characters. About Teresa, he states: "Grandados [sic] beautifully combines a housewifely frumpishness with sullen sensuality." About Llaurado he writes: "Llaurado is solid as a confused husband genuinely in love but without the slightest idea of what drives his mate." [88] While the

description of Granados (Sege, like Mosk, misspells the actress's name) attempts to give the reader a mental picture describing her attractiveness as a housewife, Llaurado is described in relation to the intellectual space that the actor is able to portray through his acting. Hatch, in a similar vein, describes Teresa as "handsome" and Ramón as an "exemplary young man." Sege also makes a point of describing the appearance and sexual appeal of Ramón's mistress: "the husband takes up with a full-thighed young beauty (portrayed with appealing zest by Alina Sánchez)" (18). Though Tomás, Teresa's friend and co-worker, is more important to the plotline than Sánchez, the reader is left wondering whether his thighs are full or skinny. Teresa's gendering in these mainstream pieces is not only evidenced in Sege's interest in Teresa's physical appearance but also in his description of her social role as a housewife. For, though it is true that Teresa is often within her home, at least half of her time on the screen she is presented at work or on the streets. This does not stop Sege from describing her as a housewife.

Compare this to Judith Crist's comments on both protagonists' physicality: "Daisy Granados is, at 37, a dark beauty, full-figured, with huge-eyed intelligence. Her Teresa is memorable. The virile, attractive Adolfo Llaurado as Ramón helps complete a portrait of the world…"[89] Crist's description has several details that make it more equitable. She mentions Granados's age, and instead of "housewifely frumpishness," she is a "dark beauty, full-figured." Finally, Ramón is not only a mind working his way

through life but is also a sexualizable being that Crist recognizes as "virile and attractive."

Mainstream reviews, included those in *Variety* and *The Nation*, also tended to be antididacticism or, at least, negatively towards Cuba's political system. Like other Cuban films before, that *Portrait* originated in a communist nation meant that some reviewers would place certain political expectations on the film. Sege, for instance, used the discourse of communism in addition to gender as a way of interpreting the film text. A scene in which a coworker of Teresa comments on the hope that the Revolution will eventually succeed in erasing machismo is described by Sege as "agit-prop." According to him, Tomás "mouth[s] lines like, 'the revolution makes the impossible possible.'"[90] Using "mouth" as a verb describing someone's speech is a way of disqualifying the value or truthfulness of what is being stated.

Another mainstream review by Judy Stone for the *San Francisco Chronicle* contributes to normalizing the use of communism as an interpretive framework for *Portrait*. She achieves this by opening her piece with the following anecdote: "There's an old 'joke' that needs a new punch line. A soapbox orator assures the crowd that 'comes the revolution, you'll eat strawberries and cream' and a little voice pipes up, 'But I don't like strawberries and cream.' The orator replies, 'Comes the revolution, you'll eat strawberries and cream'." [91] Though Stone is sympathetic to the film, both as a cinematic work and as a women's picture, she uses a joke about communism as a way of introducing to the reader the strange reality regarding sex and gender in Cuba. In the

rest of the piece, she implies that men in Cuba are put in a situation in which they must do that which displeases them, namely, stop taking advantage of women's work. And though this is true, that she uses the joke is a strong indication that, in her view, a revolutionary (communist) government that tries to do a social good by decree continues being totalitarian.

Like other mainstream reviewers about Cuban films dealing with gender (*Lucia* and *One Way or Another*), Stone applies both anti-totalitarian and feminist frameworks to the film. Her feminism is evidenced in several ways: First, she contextualizes the film by commenting on its social success in Cuba at raising controversy. This strategy of contextualizing a narrative that is clearly addressing the social realities of Cuban women and not necessarily those of American women is an attempt at retaining value, of giving the film merit for, at the very least, depicting the otherwise ignored challenges that women in Cuba still face. That is, the film retains the value of a social document about gender and sex in Cuba.

Stone's feminist perspective is further evinced in her description of characters and her interpretation of the relationship of Teresa with her coworker Tomás. Teresa's character and motivation (according to her, and in contrast with Sege, the character is played persuasively) are described in a straightforward fashion, as if the narrative facts needed no qualifying, as if the narrative facts were implicitly already qualified. Succinctly she writes: "Teresa is a textile worker... Ramón, a television repairman, thinks she's not paying enough attention to the house…He begins giving ultimatums"

(ibid.). This hyper-descriptive writing style suggests to the reader that adjectives are not necessary, that qualifying would be redundant. Stone also interprets narrative developments in a sexed way, and this is particularly evident in that she does not believe that Tomás and Teresa are having an affair or that Teresa is at all attracted to Tomás. Read in this way, *Portrait's* ending becomes less ambiguous and clearly a statement that the husband is applying a double standard in regard to marital infidelity. In the narrative, Ramón takes a lover. Stone describes the lover in a very unsympathetic way: she is a woman "who has nothing better to do with her time than lie around reading magazines and waiting to be escorted to the beach" (ibid.). Clearly, Teresa is a better human being and citizen than Ramón's mistress, which makes Ramón's betrayal quite deplorable.

More politically specialized commentaries also used gender and Cuba's political system as ways of interpreting the narrative and as providers of standards of value and aesthetic quality. These writings were longer than a review and several fit the essay format. The most significant difference between these and mainstream reviews were the degree of theoretical sophistication and the ways in which they stated their political goals.

Patricia Peyton and Carlos Broullon interviewed Vega and Granados in San Francisco, during the Telluride Film Festival. Published in *Cineaste* in the 1979/1980 issue, the interview shows in a concise manner the interviewers' set of expectations regarding the film and outline its perceived social value. The first question is to Vega:

"*Would you elaborate on your political objectives with* Portrait of Teresa*?*"[92] Each question afterwards related to issues of politics and gender in Cuba. The interviewers asked about women's reactions to the film, and about men's reactions, assuming correctly that each would be different. But perhaps the most typically feminist question was: "*The film's script was written by two men. Should a film that deals with a problem of major concern to women be written by men?*"[93] This question directly addressed issues that have been fundamental to the constitution of feminist criticism and feminist epistemology. As I commented in the previous chapter, feminist criticism has, at the very least, suspected the way men have represented women—if not outright criticized it. Implied in these suspicions and critiques is the notion that men's subject constitutions are structured around the oppression of women, and that their subject positioning opens up on vantage points from which women (not a socially constructed definition, but real beings) cannot be seen. Consistent with these ideas, Peyton, Broullon, and also Burton and, previously, Rosen (she reviewed *Lucia*, another film about women directed and written by a man) brought up the issue of sex and authoring. Vega's response is a functional way of addressing the issue. He states: "Well, if you follow this logic, then carpenters have to make movies about carpenters" and so on (25). Peyton and Broullon, assuming this logic, follow Vega's answer with an inquiry on the participation of Granados (or other women) in the construction of the script. Though Granados had some impact on the script, Vega's legitimacy, he believes, came from the fact that investigations conducted by the Academy of Sciences of Cuba inspired the initial script

idea.[94] Though he had already mentioned the role science had played in assisting him in the script, Peyton and Broullon had, perhaps, "forgotten." In their framework of reference, which has been constructed through the recognition of alternative epistemologies (not only alternative aesthetics), science, like filmmaking, was also guilty of gendered and sexed bias. Vega's appeals to science were not compelling evidence that the script was built on truthful women's experiences.

Concerns regarding sex and authoring belong to a community that acknowledges the epistemological and representational shortcomings of narratives and representations of women. In her 1981 essay on *Portrait*, Burton, one of the foremost scholars on Cuban cinema, shares these concerns and writes them down in the form of a paradox: Modern cinema is engaged in the constitution of women as men's possession through sexist iconization.[95] *Portrait* belongs to modern cinema yet it also seems to belong to the "women-centered" genre, which often has the goal of challenging sexist iconization.[96] Since both possibilities cannot simultaneously come to fruition, Burton first finds exceptions that question the idea that modern cinema is only engaged in sexism. Using the now classic John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, Burton suggests that just as painters who painted their lovers sometimes produced artwork that transcended sexism,[97] Vega, directing his wife Granados, was also able to go beyond some of the typical limitations of his sexism. Burton praises the film's "detailed" portrayal of Teresa's life and the acting Vega was able to engender from Llauradó and Granados.

She also recognizes the important social role the film had played in Cuba in opening areas of debate regarding sex inequality (53).

However, *Portrait* still belongs to modern cinema, and Burton continues her essay showing with careful textual analysis how the film betrays its own premise. She points out how Teresa is only reacting to events and how she is only knowable to the audience through these reactions. Applying both psychoanalysis and Pierre Macherey's theory of structural absence, Burton also notices how the narrative is able to portray Ramón's infidelity, yet the nature of Teresa's relationships with Tomás is left out. "It is not inconsequential that this ellipsis replicates the social attitude which the film purportedly criticizes: that extra-marital sexual intimacy is tolerable, even encouraged, for men but inconceivable for women" (55). Also absent from the narrative, Burton argues, are any pleasures that Teresa may find in her extra-curricular activities and any evidence "to the growth of Teresa's self-esteem" (55). The final tally is, thus, mixed, with Burton praising and criticizing different aspects of *Portrait* and problematizing any easy resolution to the original paradox of male-created, women-centered film.

Defining what constituted women's films was important in the early 1980s when Burton, Peyton and Broullon, and Haskell reviewed *Portrait*.[98] The 1970s had given way to a solid tradition of feminist film criticism, yet the commercial viability of women's movies in the United States, Hollywood claimed, had hampered the development of women-centered film. Already Rosen, reviewing *Lucia* in 1980 for *Ms.*, criticized Hollywood's sluggish response to the need of producing pictures for women.

To emphasize her view, she reviewed commendable film works from Cuba, Italy (*Love and Anarchy*, 1973, d. Lina Wertmuller), and France (*The Mother and the Whore*, 1973, d. Jean Eustache). In the same issue of *Ms*., Haskell also wrote reviews of other foreign films in an article subheaded by the following: "What Germany, Cuba, Hungary, France, and Australia Know About Women that Hollywood Doesn't."[99] For Rosen, the quality and diversity of this selection of foreign films about women proved the growing complexity of the genre and the eventual impossibility of using the label "woman's picture." She places *Portrait* alongside *Angi Vera*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *A Simple Story*, and *My Brilliant Career*, showing the complexity of films that use women antiheroes as their main protagonists.

Unlike other mainstream reviews that considered *Portrait* a film of questionable quality, Haskell embraced the film's theme, treatment, and place of origin and used these to give praise to the film: "But this film requires no apologies or special dispensations in the name of Third World 'development' or feminist good intentions: it is simply an artistic and dramatic success" (20). Such compliments, though inspiring, also implied the recognition, or at the very least the suspicion, that some Third World and/or feminist films have been given unjust praise. I suspect that Haskell and her readers were used to being criticized for enjoying films that dealt with women regardless of whether the films were of quality. Certainly, after commenting on Mosk's and Sege's reviews, one understands that the aesthetic and political gulfs separating

mainstream from feminist reviewers could create conflict and make Haskell defensive.[100]

Just as Vega's work was praised by separating him from his historical context (Third World underdevelopment), Haskell sees Teresa as an admirable character because she is shown battling "against domestic slavery…without benefit of grass-roots Marxist or feminist support" (20). In both instances, Haskell puts forward a conception of selfhood that is quite liberal, in fact, almost libertarian: a true social agent acts independent of or even against institutions or social structures. In this view of the self, Teresa's actions are true to herself in direct proportion to Teresa's perceived independence: "In Theresa's [sic] struggle to find the strength, the words, we see nothing less than the evolution of the Women's Movement from its most primitive urgings" (20). Imagining the women's movement represented in Teresa's struggle is a reference to feminism's 1960s mantra, "The personal is political." It also references the idea that for women to become truly independent, they must first transform their selves, struggle with their ways of being, acting, and speaking.

Though feminism was Haskell's hermeneutic framework, like the other reviewers, she "saw" a particular and idiosyncratic version of the film. In it, Teresa did not have "Marxist or feminist support." This view is puzzling when considering that Teresa's fellow workers and the union leaders are often giving her praise and encouragement. And, though the type of Marxism or feminism these characters evidenced was in relative disuse in the United States (namely, a Marxism/feminism that tries to facilitate

women's entrance into the labor force and into the public sphere, such as the union), it was still important enough to the Women's Movement that Haskell's comment seems particularly strange, as strange as Mosk's comment that the film resembled a TV sitcom.

While Haskell used language and interpretive tactics mostly associated with feminism, Judith Crist and Jo Imeson, writing for the *Saturday Review* and for *Monthly Film Bulletin* in 1980-81, respectively, mixed leftist and feminist language and frameworks in their reviews and assessments of *Portrait*.[101] Crist places her review of *Portrait* following a review of *Willie and Phil* (1980, d. Paul Mazursky), a film that she finds a "humanistic and humorous" take on the American seventies.[102] Given that *Willie and Phil* narrativizes the moral perils of some sexual freedoms,[103] *Portrait* is a considerable shift in pace. While one explores the risks to the private self brought out by paradoxical discourses on sexuality and morality in the United States, the other explores old-style "sexual politics" within a context that Crist finds "fascinating": contemporary Cuba (71). Both films were grouped together likely because they depict contradictions between public and private expectations placed on gendered subjectivities.

Crist, informed by the interview published in *Cineaste*, the contexts of which she refers to repeatedly, reproduces Vega's opinions and writes a quite positive review that highlights Teresa's class background and her desires to go beyond class and gender limitations.[104] Similar to Imeson's review, Crist begins hers with class: "*Portrait of*

Teresa sums up the situation of working women in Cuba and, to a large extent, our country."[105] This initial paragraph, as Imeson's, is quite significant in that it constructs the basis for a theory of society in which class and gender are interlinked and sets an interpretative ground on which the rest of the piece will build on. Thus, later, the film is about the "Cuban working class," and Teresa is a "textile factory" worker who is also the "union's chairperson." Teresa's quest, instead of being reduced to a matter of personal freedom and gender equality, is also constructed as an attempt to become a better citizen. In this way, gender equality, personal freedom, and civic duties become interlinked and mutually dependent. Ramón's role at impeding Teresa's wishes risks obstructing the civic, professional, and personal development of Teresa and those around her.

Imeson wrote a compelling short essay-review that referenced Julio Garcia Espinosa's ideas on imperfect cinema and that understood that Vega's use of drama was aimed precisely at making the film accessible to as many Cubans as possible. Like Crist, but more explicitly, Imeson links class to gender mores by suggesting that *Portrait* explores "the discrepancy between social practice and revolutionary ideology with regard to the position of women" (160). Given that the working class has been linked in Cuba (as in the United States), perhaps unjustly, to more archaic notions of gender and sex, and because most Cubans belong to this class, Vega's selection of a plotline based on a specific social milieu is a way of addressing the mutually constitutive formation of gender and class. Hinting a strong sympathy for the

Revolution, Imeson also examines some of the benefits the Revolution has brought to women and the challenges to women's equality even within the Revolution. Chiefly among these is the role mass media, including Cuban telenovelas, talk-shows, and magazines, all of which are referenced in the film.

In sum, reviewers of *Portrait* used the hermeneutic frameworks of gender (and sex), and totalitarianism (or its opposition) to interpret the film. Mainstream reviewers were far more likely to criticize negatively some or most aspects of the film. Their criticisms were rationalized in the following ways: they did so by placing the film in genres (TV sitcom, melodrama) that the reviewer disrespected. They commented that the plotline was predictable and tiresome. They interpreted the ending in a way that diminished any possible moral clarity. They described the characters in sexed ways, making allusions to female bodies and not to male bodies. And some used anti-totalitarian remarks as general frameworks presented to the reader.

Other reviews, published in film journals and women's magazines, also used gender and political framework expectations, but they did so in ways that reflected a feminist and/or Marxist perspective(s). These reviewers tended to make more explicit their political goals and to assume that the value of the film was related to *Portrait*'s contribution to the discussion of gender inequality, the double-shift, and the double standard. Though a couple of reviews isolated gender from class, the rest attempted to explain the constitution of gender in relationship to class, thus problematizing personal and/or isolated solutions to inequality.

Up to a Certain Point

Up to a Certain Point was exhibited in March 1985, and most of the reviews commented upon here were published weeks after its release. Several characteristics of the film made its critical reception unusual. First, Gutiérrez was, with Santiago Alvarez, an internationally known director and recognized as an auteur.[106] Second, the film was released shortly after the release of the documentary *Improper Conduct*, directed by Nestor Almendros, a celebrated Cuban filmmaker who had left the island in the early 1960s.[107] Since this documentary dealt with homosexual repression in Cuba, and in the months preceding *Up to a Certain Point*'s release Gutiérrez had written a few letters to explain what had actually happened in Cuba, Gutiérrez became linked to *Improper Conduct*. Third, mostly men reviewed the film and almost all reviewers relied on Marxist concepts or anti-totalitarian discourses to give meaning to the film. Perhaps predictably, issues of gender and sexual inequality, though always mentioned, were not problematized.

Treating a film as the product of an auteur involves invoking a system of expectations about creative authorship, style, and quality that seriously affect an interpretation. Commonly, critics imagine the auteur to be more able than the average director at predicting, controlling, and organizing the signifying process that filmmaking is.[108] The implication is that the auteur is not only an artist, fully cognizant of the aesthetic properties of film, but also a communicator able to infuse with meaning a quite diverse set of filmic elements such as sound, image, mise en scène, dialogue,

and, of course, narrative.[109] As Janet Staiger has argued, that critics have conferred the auteur such signifying power and aesthetic mastery commonly has meant that critics expect the auteur's work to have a "message" that is discussed seriously and that this "serious" message revolves around a social problem or meaningful issue.[110]

A good example of the way these expectations structure a review is Fernández's writing on *Up to a Certain Point*. Published in the *Village Voice* in March 1985, his review engages the film critically, but the goal seems to be to prove Gutiérrez's directorial abilities: "In *Up to a Certain Point*, Tomás Gutierrez Alea has fashioned a Cuban-socialist view of the problem [of machismo], incorporating both an instinctive sense of the subtleties of Cuban sexual dynamics and the rigor of materialist analysis." [111] As is noted in this paragraph, Fernández favors Gutiérrez's work and looks positively on the application of Marxist aesthetics ("rigour of materialist analysis"). Maybe because of his respect for Gutiérrez, Fernández's review seems at times not very critical. For instance, commenting on Oscar's character and his supposed transformation, Fernández writes, without irony: "[Oscar] learns some profound lessons about machismo, his own." These profound lessons attest to the seriousness of the message and the importance of the film. He also writes: "All of which sounds awfully pedagogic" (58). Though this seems to be the beginning of a criticism, Fernández retraces his steps and goes back to restating that Gutiérrez's directorial mastery allowed for a more subtle presentation of the issues.[112]

Like Fernández, John Mosier, reporting about Cannes 1985 to the *New Orleans Review*, a literary and cultural magazine, is quite complimentary of the film and the director and believes that the different things that had bothered some of the other reviewers (treating machismo as a new issue; the narrative looses focus) enrich Gutiérrez's criticism of Cuban society and Cuban subjectivity and prove again Gutiérrez is a master at his craft.[113] Mosier argues that, like in *Memories*, Gutiérrez shows more than expected, particularly to those willing to look. Though the film is described as being three quarters of a feature (which could be interpreted as the beginning of a negative commentary), Mosier playfully comments that "three quarters of one of Gutierrez Alea's films is better than four quarters of any other film in Cuba" (78).

Precisely because of the expectation of authorial quality, film-works by important directors are also subject to unusual standards. Kopkind, reviewing for *The Nation*, exemplifies this by issuing a negative review of the film and then stating the following: "I'm harder on this movie than I would be on a piece of expensive drivel out of Hollywood because Gutiérrez is a serious and important filmmaker, a careful critic of Cuban politics and culture and a revolutionary."[114]

While the assumption of a communicative goal is common in criticism of auteur work,[115] this communication is linked to an "extraordinary" ability to use film aesthetics. Accordingly, auteurs are assumed to have an aesthetic signature that testifies to the authenticity of the work. Fernández, Edna (of *Variety*),[116] Kopkind, and Mosier

vouched for the authenticity of *Up to a Certain Point* (and simultaneously proved their own authenticity as critics who are able to recognize aesthetic signatures) by commenting on the similarities between this film and Gutiérrez's best known work (in the United States), *Memories*. Fernández, like Kopkind, recognizes the dialectic narrative techniques (worker, intellectual: progressive, conservative) previously employed in both films. Similarly, Kopkind states: "The subject now is machismo, conceived dialectically as both the sensibility and the system that imposes the Hispanic male ego on Cuban society."[117] But since his review was negative, Kopkind must justify it based on his expectations about auteurs. Thus, he criticizes Gutiérrez for using a too simplistic Marxist analysis in the film, an analysis that ultimately states the obvious and yet limited idea that "social history has conditioned individual behavior" (377). Apparently, Gutiérrez's limitations are closely related to aesthetic premises and thematic choices. Kopkind argues that this film shows that Gutiérrez's "cinematic methods have not progressed much beyond the inventions of *Memories of Underdevelopment*: moody close-ups, intimate conversations followed by alienated pans…" (377). The list continues. In addition, Kopkind points out that even the issue of the misplaced intellectual, caught in his rationalizing traps, is a tired theme.

The variation regarding the assessment and interpretations of the same filmic textual characteristic is structured by the set of expectations regarding auteurs the reviewer brings to the film. When betrayed, these expectations can lead to extreme rejection of the text, but more often, reviewers will find a way to redeem the director.

Kopkind spoke about Gutiérrez's film not fitting Gutiérrez's talent, which is a criticism within a compliment. Edna, for *Variety*, commented within a generally negative review about how one redeeming aspect of the film is the mixing of documentary and fictional footage, much in the same way Gutiérrez had done. Also, reviewers bring to the film a sort of preemptive redemption, an attitude of intrinsic acceptance. For instance, and regarding also the use of documentary in fictional narratives, in his essay/review, Mosier reminds the reader that ICAIC has typically trained their directors first in documentary and assumed the documentarian skills would transfer to fictional features.[118] Gutiérrez, Mosier suggests, has upped the ante, for in *Up to a Certain Point* Gutiérrez uses a documentary filmmaker within the fictional narrative to tell a story about Cuban reality. Arturo, Oscar's friend and the director of the film Oscar is supposed to be scripting, throughout the movie is taking footage of dock-workers and interviewing them. The workers, who begin by talking about machismo, gradually change their speech and become more critical of the jobs, their lives, and the way Cuba is run. Mosier believes that this is what Gutiérrez was trying to communicate. In this interpretation of the film, which is based in the subtlest of readings, the machismo plotline is window-dressing for Gutiérrez's serious indictment of Cuba's working conditions, bureaucracy, and economic organization.

Mosier's reading may be unusual (certainly unique in the set of reviews I analyzed), but his expectations regarding Gutiérrez's political savvy are not. After all, being an auteur also implies having social responsibilities and the intelligence to

address them seriously and insightfully. Gutiérrez had lived up to these expectations by acting as a cultural spokesperson on behalf of Cuba during the months preceding the release of his film. In 1984, Almendros's film *Improper Conduct* had been released in the United States, and his heavy criticism of Cuba's treatment of the gay community had prompted a series of pledges of sympathy for gays in Cuba and criticisms of Cuba's government. Trying to rectify this wave of anti-Cubanism (Gutiérrez's opinion), Gutiérrez wrote letters that attempted to shed light on the issue of homosexual discrimination in Cuba. Thus, his film was later given extra-textual meanings based on his criticism of *Improper Conduct*. Fernández, for instance, titled his positive review of *Up to a Certain Point*, "Proper Conduct." In the title he implies that Gutiérrez's explores sexual mores to emphasize the didactic aspect of the film.

Moreover, Kopkind mentions that Gutiérrez's letter and interventions regarding the film *Improper Conduct* "are useful correctives to the opportunistic campaign in Europe and America which uses those issues as an excuse for Cuba-bashing."[119] Kopkind also commented on the degree of responsibility that Americans have for Cuban cultural isolation. While in the sixties, some Americans like Angela Davis and Allen Ginsberg brought awareness about race, gender, and sexual issues to Cuba, the demise of radical America "has left Cuban artists and intellectuals without access to an alternative progressive Western culture" (377).

All critics did not share Kopkind's support for Gutiérrez. Take David Chute who, writing for *The Herald Examiner*, issued a ferocious piece against *Up to a Certain*

Point, against Cuba, and its socialist regime.[120] He titles his piece "A film from the boy-meets-tractor school," connoting old-fashioned Cold War stereotypes of Marxist countries. Consistent with these stereotypes, Gutiérrez is no longer an auteur but becomes a "revolutionary-establishment-loyalist filmmaker" (ibid.). To prove this, he reminds the reader that Gutiérrez criticized *Improper Conduct*. What he thinks about Gutiérrez and *Improper Conduct* is made clear when he writes the following: "A surprising number of American leftists also lined up to argue that it's OK to torment gays as long as your heart is in the right place." Chute proceeds then to call "ICAIC Havana's Boy-Meets-Tractor School of Propaganda Scriptology" (ibid.). In his criticism, Chute extends his negative impression of Gutiérrez and the film to other narrative elements including women ("Cuba, where dames are needed to enhance the labor force") and Latin America (Oscar is researching the effects of "Old Latin chauvinism"). In both of these instances, it is not clear whether Chute is making light of the Cuban project for women's economic equality and Cuba's Latin character, or whether he actually believes that women should be referred to as "dames" and that chauvinism is characteristic of Latin men. Ultimately, Chute's position is structured on anti-communism and anti-totalitarianism; he shows this by closing his piece stating the belief that honest filmic work can only happen in democracies such as the United States.

Though Cuba's style of government was not as common an issue in 1985 as it was in 1973, when *Memories* was reviewed, one finds several of the same discursive

traces that suggest this Cuban film was understood in terms of communism/socialism. Vincent Canby, writing for *The New York Times*, uses ideas associated with communism in an ironic fashion in a mostly negative review of the film.[121] For instance, commenting on Lina, he suggests that the viewer easily knows that Lina is going to become Oscar's object of desire when she is portrayed as a perfect revolutionary. With the same tone he explains Oscar's limitations as a man and a citizen in the following way: "It's also not surprising that Oscar…treats Lina almost as badly as the most unreconstructed, pre-revolutionary cliché of the Cuban male" (19). The use of "unreconstructed" suggests that Canby knows the efforts the Cuban leadership had put into transforming the citizenry. The adjective used, however, signals that he believes that outside forces (propaganda? social coercion?) are producing the transformation of individuals. Canby's biggest criticism is that the characters seemed "manufactured to make a point." Two things on this: first, the use of "manufactured" implies that the characters have an ideological goal, not an artistic or representational one. The characters are not "crafted," "created," or "drawn to portray." They are "manufactured" and thus functional, and their function is not ambiguous, rich, or complex. They have the function of making a point, just as in propaganda. Second: though probably Canby does not think that trying to make a point is wrong for a film, in this context, to make a point implies that the film is heavily didactic and propagandistic.

Most reviewers, however, expressed at least some sympathy toward the Cuban Revolution, socialism, or Marxism, which again points to the changes that had occurred

in the American cultural landscape since 1972, when the first post-revolutionary Cuban films were shown in the United States. Fernández, for instance, gives unreserved praise to the film and extends his praise to the social system. “Alea is an artist, who fully supports the process that has transformed his country, but he does so with irony, without ass-kissing.”[122] This comment implies that Gutiérrez is right to support a process that has transformed Cuba and that gives him the freedom to explore individualism. Edna in her negative review also finds ways to complement Cuba: “The theme is stated from the opening titles. It is all about machismo in what is otherwise a progressive, egalitarian and revolutionary society.”[123] Kopkind also dislikes the film, yet, he implies that at least some excellent films are the product of strict Marxist analyses. Gutiérrez’s failure was, Kopkind argues, the result of a too simplistic Marxist analysis in the film, an analysis that ultimately state the obvious and yet limited idea that “social history has conditioned individual behavior.”[124] Mosier, finally, implicitly praises the social dynamics that have allowed Gutiérrez to produce a film of such subtle criticality.

All of these reviewers used at least some Marxist aesthetic principles to analyze *Up to a Certain Point*. They identified potentially dialectic aspects of the film, and at least Edna and Mosier also read the film as a criticism of Cuba’s material conditions (resources are not fully available to make the work in the docks better), distribution of wealth (wealth surrounds Oscar and Arturo: the workers are shown in poverty), and ongoing class differences and privileges (wealth is linked to education and is shown as

giving Oscar and Arturo the ability to inhabit or construct the public sphere: the workers are mostly not educated, black, and subject of the documentary, not the creators).

Lastly, gender, though quite important to the plotline of the film, is never addressed in any complex fashion. Simply, most reviewers stated that the film was about machismo in Cuba and how an intellectual (Oscar) becomes aware of his own machismo. That said, a few commentaries suggest specific issues regarding gender that are worth mentioning. First, Fernández brings up the issue of nationality and ethnicity and their relationship to feminism. He begins his review by criticizing American and British feminists who have misused the term machismo. As he points out, "the Mexicans, who coined the phrase, weren't thinking of no women's lib. Machismo was a social problem because its strict code made men kill each other. That women also got blown away…was secondary. Stop machismo: Save the men."[125] Though he is right, beginning his review with that correction is, at the very least, odd. It seems a way of distancing himself from feminisms (as well as from Mexicans) and of defining his point of view as Cuban American. Certainly his review could have done the same thing (given that he is only concerned with commenting on Gutiérrez as a great director), which makes the inclusion of these comments more important. Though Fernández uses some feminist views (such as describing machismo as a "social evil"), his ideas do not go beyond what a very superficial analysis of the film would have engendered.

Edna, the sole woman of this set of reviewers writing on the film, produced a more interesting interpretation. This has to do with her perspective on the resolution to

the ethical conflict of Oscar and what it may represent. Although he is married, Oscar begins an affair with Lina (the dockworker). He ends up loosing both Lina and his wife. Given that the narrative proves Oscar is a macho, and that Oscar is a filmmaker, like Gutiérrez, Edna believes that Gutiérrez is using the film to state that "no male is yet qualified to deal with the theme [of machismo]."[126] Though I find that interpretation unlikely as one intended by Gutiérrez, it is important to remark that Edna is the only reviewer that used specific expectations regarding gender to interpret the film. In particular she transferred the following expectation (or hermeneutic axiom) to Gutiérrez: women have a privileged position from which they can speak about gender and sexual oppression. Men cannot speak from a position which they do not occupy.

In sum, auteur expectations, Gutiérrez's relationship to *Improper Conduct*, the film's place of origin, and the Marxist aesthetics that informed it shaped the reviews of *Up to a Certain Point*. Treated as an auteur, Gutiérrez was measured against his own work. The film was accepted or rejected based on whether the reviewer thought that *Up to a Certain Point* had lived up to expectations partly set by *Memories*, Gutiérrez's best known film. In addition, given that *Improper Conduct*, a film about repression of homosexuals in Cuba, had been released a few months before Gutiérrez's work, and because Gutiérrez intervened as a spokesperson of the Cuban cultural world, *Up to a Certain Point* was linked to *Improper Conduct*. Finally, and like in the rest of the cases examined in this chapter, Marxism and totalitarianism also were used as ways of accessing and interpreting the film. That said, the theme of totalitarianism less

prominent, especially if we compared this film's critical reception with *Memories*'s critical reception during the 1970s.

Conclusion

In this chapter I investigated the critical reception of five Cuban films in the United States from roughly 1972, the time when the First Cuban Film Festival was organized, to 1985, the time when the last film was exhibited. During this time, I noticed a transformation in the way U.S. cultural workers saw Cuban film and a transformation of the way film interpretation is used to display the worker's cultural location. These changes can be better characterized in reference to the reviewer's use of a hermeneutics of ambivalence to interpret *Memories* and the relative acceptance of Marxism and Cuba's political system found in most reviews of *Up to a Certain Point*.

Based only on this evidence, I infer that in fifteen years the idea of Cuba changed, in particular among cultural workers. I also infer that changes in the idea of Cuba happened alongside changes in the way political identities were performed. In the early seventies, the social memory of the Missile Crisis (much in the same way that the Bay of Pigs was fundamental to the national memory of Cuba) was fresh and affected the general attitude of Americans regarding Cuba and regarding themselves. In addition, because of the economic and cultural embargo the United States had (and continues to have) on Cuba, culture from the island, including film, was not widely available. Predictably, when *Memories* was first exhibited, reviewers did not know what to do

with it. There it was, a film from communist Cuba where, Americans had been told, propaganda was bread and butter; yet, *Memories* seemed nothing like propaganda. It was subtle and highly intellectual. It resembled art cinema from Europe and appeared to be a critique of the Cuban system. Not surprisingly, a couple of critics (Hatch and Schjeldahl) could see little of Cuba in *Memories*. Their expectations of politics and place, as they had been constructed by Cold War culture, were unmet. But because of *Memories*'s non-communist veneer, most critics liked it. Burton comments, slyly, that they only liked it because it seemed a critique of the Cuban government. She says: Not so fast.

Underscoring the reception of *Memories* was a particular type of discourse about communism, in particular as it relates to liberalism. I am talking about the way cultural workers repeatedly used ideas about cultural freedoms. Either because *Memories* had been censured in the United States or because it proved that not all Cuban cultural texts were propagandistic, these writers returned to the idea of cultural freedom and its opposite, propaganda, as a way of gauging the film's aesthetic (and civic) quality. Moreover, because of its relationship to liberal ideas of freedom, reviewers had an ambivalent relationship to the film, using it to assert their own independence from the field of power, yet also using it to criticize a Cuban system that, they believed, did not produce the necessary conditions for freedom of expression or aesthetic experimentation. This ambivalence challenged and reconstituted the U.S. field of power.

Lucia was such a different film that it elicited quite different responses, even when it was exhibited only weeks after *Memories* in 1973. Unlike *Memories*, this film was clearly within a socialist perspective and critics came to it with different expectations. Some showed these expectations when they used a Marxist lexicon to make sense of the film. These reviewers gravitated towards textual explanations that highlighted class and oppression and that made *Lucia* a film where historical change was represented as the result of collective action. Besides these Marxist interpretations, other reviewers used a mixture of Marxism and feminism where Marxism was the preeminent framework. In these reviews, the problem of gender is one that could be solved with a Marxist revolution and the application of general principles of material egalitarianism. Gender, as a distinct system of subjection, was important in some reviews, and, in these, the film's characters were measured against feminist standards. The Lucías, thus evaluated, were praised or criticized depending on what type of social agents they seemed to be and to whether they showed feminist characteristics such as intelligence, independence, and awareness of oppression.

Gómez's film, *One Way or Another*, was reviewed in mainstream media in terms of its relationship to Cuban communism and as a way of hailing liberal ideas about culture. Like reviewers of *Memories*, these reviewers applied a hermeneutics of ambivalence and used this to create a cultural location independent from the field of power, yet aligned with it on issues regarding cultural freedom. In their efforts to praise some of the qualities of the film, reviewers validated Cuban culture; yet, they did so

while asserting that typical Cuban culture is propagandistic. Other cultural workers, publishing in specialized journals, used Marxist and Third Cinema aesthetics to comprehend the use of filmic techniques and the ensemble of narrative devices such as documentary footage, interviews with real people, and a fictionalized narrative. In contrast to mainstream reviewers, these cultural workers hailed the film as one of the best examples of leftist revolutionary cinema.

Like in previous cases, negative criticisms of *Portrait of Teresa* were more common among mainstream reviewers who saw it as a limited, small, film that dealt with the issue of gender in a unsatisfactory fashion. More specialized reviews claimed the film's significance rested on its discussion of the contradiction between public and private standards of gender and the frank depiction of the double-shift and double standard.

Finally, the fact that Gutiérrez, the best known Cuban director at the time, had directed *Up to a Certain Point* meant that the film was often treated as the product of an auteur. Given this, the film's aesthetic characteristics were compared to Gutiérrez's perceived style and negatively or positively reviewed based on whether the reviewer believed Gutiérrez had managed to maintain, or not, the high level of quality proper to an auteur.

Each of these case studies shows that reviewers had a tendency to engage Cuban film based on his or her perception of the politics of the island. Hence, discourses on socialism and liberal discourses on freedoms were the two most important ideologies

used to legitimize a rejection or acceptance of Cuban films. The commonality of these ideologies suggests that these defined the *habitus* of the 1970s U.S. cultural field. These ideologies provided a set of knowledges that served as expectations to interpret and evaluate Cuban film. Key among these knowledges was the idea that Cuban films were supposed to be propagandistic. With this knowledge, mainstream reviewers went about their business looking for traces of propaganda and they found them. The preferred evidence of propaganda was characters speaking positively about the Revolution. A second evidence of propaganda was any type of pedagogic or educational claim.

Conversely, reviewers and writers who sympathized with Cuba's political system and Cuba's struggles tended to write for specialized magazines and trade journals (though not *Variety*). These were prime media for film criticism influenced by Marxist and feminist aesthetics and, accordingly, consistently presented reviews that recognized the links between Cuba's revolutionary culture and leftist (as well as some feminist) Americans. A rejection of Cold War ideology and the transformation of the American university system fostered these links. As shown in the previous chapter, this transformation allowed for the "official" existence of previously subjugated knowledges. In these knowledges, particularly those inspired by the 1960s counter-culture and feminist theory, Third World revolutions, and in particular Cuba, were emblematic of the struggle between center and margins. This symbolic relation provided epistemological affinities based on a similar optics: Cuban film and some

American critics and scholars looked together at the center and issued criticisms against Hollywood, patriarchy, and capitalism.

As the chapter shows, the performance of self, seen as a unit of analysis and typically evidenced in the display of political beliefs, knowledges, and emotions, changed during the fifteen years covered in the chapter. Since this unit of analysis is constructed in the convergence of the field of cultural production, the *habitus* the writer mediates, and the presentation of political identities, I suggest that the changes are evidence of changes in the field of cultural production, changes in the *habitus* the writers mediated, and changes in the presentation of political identities. In the following and concluding chapter I will comment on these issues and compare them to the issues raised in the Cuban chapters.

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[1] Andrew Kopkind, "*Memories of Underdevelopment*," *The Nation*, March 30, 1985, 377.

[2] Film critics work in variety of institutions. Some of these may be invested in the constitution of Hollywood as an entertainment paradigm. Others, including those that work within academia and intellectual magazines and journals, may well be invested in contesting the Hollywood system. For a review of interpretive procedures followed by the latter, see David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[3] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 419.

[4] Horacio D. Lofredo, "Short Notices," *Film Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1972-1973): 56-57.

[5] Amos Vogel, Aruna Vasudevan, Andrew Sarris, Annette Michelson, Dwight MacDonald, Jack Gelger, Jay Cocks, Jonas Mekas, Nat Hentoff, Richard Gilman, Ricki Franklin, Stanley Kauffmann, Stephen Koch, and William Wolf, "Censoring Cuba," Letter, *The New York Review of Books*, May 4, 1972: n.p.

[6] Stanley Kauffmann, "Stanley Kauffmann on Films: A Journal of the Plague Years by Stefan Kanfer. *Memories of Underdevelopment*," *New Republic* 168 (May 19, 1973): 22, 32.

[7] Janny Scott, "Stanley Kauffmann: A Steady Critical Eye on Film's Shifting Currents," *The New York Times*, June 28, 1998: (n.p.); Jun Kim, "Regarding Film. Author: Stanley Kauffmann," *PopMatters* May 2001. Retrieved November 11, 2001, from http://popmatters.com.

[8] Scott, "Stanley Kauffmann," n.p.

[9] *The New Republic* is one of the most prestigious liberal magazines in the United States. Its readership is highly educated (99 percent attended college) and wealthy (the average household income in 2001 was over $150,000). "The TNR

Media Kit," in *The New Republic Online*, *The New Republic*, retrieved February 3, 2003, from http://www.tnr.com/media_kit/.

[10] Among those that, like Kauffmann, mentioned censorship regarding *Memories* are Lofredo, "Short Notices"; Peter Schjeldahl, "Cuban 'Memories' You Won't Soon Forget," *The New York Time,* May 20, 1973: 13; Lesage, "Images of Underdevelopment," *Jump Cut*, no. 1 (May 1974): 9-11.

[11] Kauffmann, "*Memories of Underdevelopment*," 32.

[12] Vincent Canby, "*Memories of Underdevelopment*," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1973: n.p.

[13] Schjeldahl, "Cuban 'Memories'," 13.

[14] Colin L. Westerback, "The Screen," *Commonweal*, July 27, 1973: 405.

[15] Kauffmann mentions the film *Love*. Kauffmann, "*Memories of Underdevelopment*," 32.

[16] Schjeldahl, "Cuban 'Memories'," 13.

[17] Westerback, "The Screen," 405.

[18] Robert Hatch, "Films: Robert Hatch," *The Nation*, June 11, 1973: 764-65.

[19] Steve Hogner, "*Memories of Underdevelopment*," *American Statesman* [Austin, Texas] June 8, 1975: n.p.

[20] It is important to point out that Hogner is not politically conservative. Indeed, he uses the review of *Memories* to criticize United States policy in Vietnam.

[21] Andrew Sarris quoted in John Hartl, "*Memories* Lingers on," *The Seattle Times* [Seattle], November 18, 1978: n.p.

[22] David Elliott, "*Memories of Underdevelopment* Stuns with Its Delicacy," *Sun-Times* [Chicago] October 20, 1978: n.p.

[23] Julianne Burton, "*Memories of Underdevelopment* in the Land of Overdevelopment," *Cineaste* 8, no. 1 (1977): 16.

[24] Enrique Fernández, "Razzing the Bureaucracy," *Village Voice* [New York], March 26 1985, 45+.

[25] Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 34.

[26] To read more on the rhetorical strategies of criticism, see Bordwell, *Making Meaning*, 34-42.

[27] Kauffmann, "Stanley Kauffmann on Films: Communist Films, Two Kinds," *The New Republic*, June 10, 1978: 18-19.

[28] Burton, "*Memories of Underdevelopment,"* 17.

[29] Fernández, "Razzing the Bureaucracy," 45.

[30] William Alexander, "Class, Film Language, and Popular Cinema: Jorge Sanjinéz and Tomás Gutierrez Alea," *Jump Cut*, no. 30 (March 1985): 45-48.

[31] Hatch, "Films," 764.

[32] Hartl, "*Memories* Lingers on."

[33] Alexander, "Class, Film Language, and Popular Cinema," 48.

[34] Hogner, "*Memories of Underdevelopment*," n.p.

[35] Peter Rist, "*Lucia*," in *Magill's Survey of Cinema: Foreign Language Films, Vol. IV*, ed. Frank Magill (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Salem Press, 1985), 1858-63.

[36] Michael Myerson, Memories of Underdevelopment*: The Revolutionary Films of Cuba* (New York: Grossman, 1973); Nora Sayre, "Screen: Solas's "*Lucia*," *The New York Times*, March 1, 1974: n.p.; Molly Haskell, "Three Sisters, Cuban Style," *The Village Voice*, March 7, 1974, n.p.; Robert Hatch "Films," *The Nation*, March 16, 1974: 350; Penelope Gilliat, "The Current Cinema," *The New Yorker*, April 8, 1974: n.p.; Meg Matthews, "*Lucia*," *Films in Review* 25 (May 1974): 310; Westerback, "The Screen," *Commonweal*, July 27, 1973: 405; Peter Biskind, "Struggles with History," *Jump Cut*, no. 2 (Jul/Aug 1974): 7-8; Ana Marie Taylor, "Lucia," in *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1974/1975): 53-55; Julianne Burton, "Provocative Cuban Films in a Current Festival," *The San Francisco Examiner*,

October 3, 1976; John Mraz, "Visual Style and Historical Portrayal: *Lucia*," *Jump Cut*, no. 19 (Dec. 1978): 21-27; Marta Alvear, "Every Point of Arrival is a Point of Departure: An Interview with Humberto Solas," *Jump Cut*, no. 19 (December 1978): 27-33; Marjorie Rosen, "The Return of the 'Women's Picture'," *Ms.*., (June 1980): 29-34; Rist, "*Lucia*," 1858-63.

[37] Myerson, Memories, 115.

[38] Biskind, "Struggles with History," 7.

[39] Myerson, Memories, 120.

[40] Biskind, "Struggles with History," 8.

[41] Myerson, Memories, 115.

[42] Biskind, "Struggles with History," 8.

[43] Rist, "Lucia," 1860; Rosen, "The Return," 29.

[44] Colin L. Westerback, "The Screen," *Commonweal*, April 5, 1974: 110.

[45] Biskind, "Struggles with History," 8

[46] Mraz, "Visual Style," 21-27.

[47] Biskind, "Struggles with History," 8.

[48] Hatch, "Films," 110.

[49] See previous chapter and Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Avon, 1969).

[50] Myerson, Memories, 111-114.

[51] Biskind, "Struggles with History," 7.

[52] Rist, "*Lucia*," 1860.

[53] Westerback, "The Screen," 109.

[54] Matthews, "*Lucia*," 310.

[55] Hatch, "Films," 350.

[56] Ana M. López, "The Melodrama in Latin America: Films, Telenovelas and the Currency of a Popular Form," *Wide Angle* 7, no. 3 (1985): 4-13.

[57] Susan Stark, "A Trilogy of Love with a Cuban Accent," *The Detroit Free Press* [Detroit], May 23, 1975: n.p.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Gilliatt, "The Current Cinema."

[60] Sayre, "Screen," n.p.; Haskell, "Three Sisters," 17-21; Rosen, "The Return," 29-34.

[61] Sayre, “Screen,” n.p.; Haskell, “Three Sisters,” 17-21; Rosen, “The Return,” 29-34.

[62] Rosen, “The Return,” 29.

[63] Sayre, “Screen”; Haskell, “Three Sisters,” 17-21.

[64] Rosen, “The Return,” 29.

[65] Haskell, “Three Sisters,” 19.

[66] Rosen, “The Return,” 30.

[67] Michael Kernan, “Festival Showcases the Films of Cuba,” *The Washington Post* [Washington], May 3, 1978: n.p.; Tom Buckley, “At the Movies,” *The New York Times* [New York], May 12, 1978: n.p.

[68] Kernan, “Festival,” n.p.

[69] Robert W. Butler, "Cuba's Role Revolution is Male," *The Kansas City Star* [Kansas City], April 26, 1983: n.p.

[70] See Chapter 3 and 4 on imperfect cinema.

[71] Dennis West, “*One Way or Another* (*De Cierta Manera*),” in *Magill's Survey of Cinema: Foreign Language Films, Vol. IV*, ed. Frank Magill (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1985), 2287-88.

[72] The only mainstream review that gave total praise to the film is a short piece at *The New York Post*, May 1, 1981. It has no byline. It begins stating: "An extraordinary cinema winner." This same tone is kept throughout the rest of the piece. "Universal 'Portrait'," *Post* [New York] May 1, 1981: n.p.

[73] Mosk, "*Retrato de Tersea*," *Variety*, September 5, 1979, 26. Sege, "Retrato de Teresa," *Variety*, November 7, 1979, 18+.

[74] The film also was shown at the Los Angeles International Film Exposition in 1980 and at the Telluride Film Festival the same year. "Puzzling Seizure by L.A. Customs of Cuba's 'Teresa'," *Variety*, February 27, 1980, 57.

[75] Mosk, "*Retrato,*"26; Sege, "*Retrato,*." 18+.

[76] Mosk, "*Retrato,*" 26.

[77] Pastor Vega, the director, declared in 1980 that his goal was to problematize the effects the Revolution had on women's lives and to arouse polemic and debate. Patricia Peyton and Carlos Broullon, "*Portrait of Teresa*: An Interview with Pastor Vega and Daisy Granados," *Cineaste* 10, no. 1 (1979/1980): 24-25+.

[78] Mosk, "*Retrato,*" 26.

[79] For Latin American melodrama, see López, "Melodrama."

[80] See the previous Chapter's section on Feminist Film Criticism.

[81] Sege, "*Retrato.,*" 18.

[82] This is not to say that women reviewers simply enjoyed the film. Janet Maslin, writing for *The New York Times*, comments that "the story of [Teresa and Ramón's] marriage is meandering and often slack." Maslin, "Film: *Portrait of Teresa* at the Modern," *The New York Times* [New York], April 27, 1981: 15.

[83] The descriptions of "exhaustive" and the feeling that the pace slow is likely a reaction to a nine-minute sequence of scenes that depicts Teresa waking up before everybody and beginning her work cooking, doing the laundry, and preparing the evening's dinner. When everything is ready, she wakes up Ramón and her kids so that they can begin their day.

[84] Hatch, "Films," 389.

[85] See Chapter 5.

[86] See for instance Molly Haskell, "Seeing: What Germany, Cuba, Hungary, France, and Australia Know About Women That Hollywood Doesn't," *Ms.*, June 1980, 17-21. See also Nyisha Mbalia Shakur and John Downing, "Selected Third World Classic Films," *Film Library Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1983): 65, and Jo Imeson, "*Retrato de Teresa* (*Portrait of Teresa*)," *Monthly Film Bulletin* 48 (August 1981): 160-61.

[87] Mosk, "*Retrato,*" 26.

[88] Sege, "*Retrato.,*" 18.

[89] See Judith Crist, "Mazursky's Clear-Eyed Vision," *Saturday Review* 7 (August 1980): 71.

[90] Sege, "*Retrato.,*" 18.

[91] Judy Stone, "Machismo and the Revolution," *San Francisco Chronicle* [San Francisco] February 6, 1980: n.p.

[92] Emphasis in the original. Peyton and Broullon, "*Portrait of Teresa,*" 24.

[93] Emphasis in the original. Ibid., 25.

[94] For more on the subject, see Chapter 5's discussion on *Portrait*.

[95] Julianne Burton, "*Portrait of Teresa,*" *Film Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1981): 57. Burton used the same body of this essay to write a review for the *Magill's Survey of Cinema*. Burton, "*Retrato de Teresa,*" in *Magill's Survey of Cinema: Foreign Language Films, Vol. VI,* ed. Frank Magill (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Salem Press, 1985), 2547-52.

[96] Burton, "*Portrait,*" 52.

[97] Berger writes: "Among the hundreds of thousands of nudes which make up the tradition there are perhaps a hundred…exceptions." These nudes are

exceptional because the "painter's subject is also the "object" of his affections." Berger in Burton, "*Portrait*," 52.

[98] See Chapter 6, section on Feminist Film Criticism.

[99] Haskell, "Seeing," 17.

[100] To Mosk, the film was TV sitcom quality; to Sege, it was "pedestrian."

[101] See Crist, "Mazursky's Clear-Eyed Vision," 70-1; Imeson, "*Retrato de Teresa*," 160-1.

[102] Crist, "Mazursky's Clear-Eyed Vision," 71.

[103] The film deals with the friendship of Willie, Jeannete, and Phil and the challenges to their friendship over time.

[104] Crist refers to Vega's use of research by the Cuban Academy of Sciences. She also refers to Teresa's quest as a search for a life as a "human being," an expression right from *Cineaste*'s interview.

[105] See also Imeson, "*Retrato de Teresa*,"160.

[106] More discussion on auteurism and auteur theory later.

[107] See Chapter 3.

[108] Andrew Sarris, one of the first proponents of auteurism in the United States, listed three simple principles of auteur theory that worked as expectations of

critics: First, auteur theory is applied to directors of unusual proficiency. Second, the personality of the directory can be used "as a criterion of value." Third, an auteur gives "interior meaning" to a film and makes it into an art-work. Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings,* ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1992), 586.

[109] For a later rendition of the aesthetic and semantic underpinnings of auteur theory and its application to American film, see Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings,* ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 1992), 589-605, and Bordwell, *Making Meaning,* 43-70.

[110] Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 185-86.

[111] Enrique Fernández, "Proper Conduct," *Village Voice* [New York], March 19, 1985, 58.

[112] To this day I do not understand how we came to believe that pedagogy was a blunt communication weapon.

[113] John Mosier, "Cannes 1984," *New Orleans Review* 12, no. 1 (1985): 58-89.

[114] Andrew Kopkind, "*Up to a Certain Point*," *The Nation*, March 30, 1985, 377.

[115] Peter Wollen recalls: "Renoir once remarked that a director spends his whole life making one film; this film, which it is the task of the critic to construct, consists not only of the typical features of its variants…, but of the principle of variation which governs it, that is its esoteric structure." "The Auteur Theory," 599.

[116] Edna, "*Hasta Cierto Punto* (*Up to a Certain Point*)," *Variety* [New York], December 4, 1984: 26.

[117] Kopkind, "*Up to a Certain Point*," 377.

[118] Mosier, "Cannes 1984," 78.

[119] Kopkind, "*Up to a Certain Point*," 377.

[120] David Chute, "A Film from the Boy-Meets-Tractor School," *The Herald Examiner* [Los Angeles] April 6, 1985.

[121] Vincent Canby, "Film: Alea's 'Certain Point,' from Cuba," *The New York Times* [New York], March 13, 1985, 19.

[122] Fernández, "Proper Conduct," 58.

[123] Edna, "*Hasta Cierto Punto*," 26.

[124] Kopkind, "*Up to a Certain Point*, 377.

[125] Fernández, “Proper Conduct,” 58.

[126] Edna, “*Hasta Cierto Punto*,” 26.

8

Conclusion

Growing up in Mexico, during a time when Cuban culture was a common identifier of leftist identity, gave me the awareness that my political identity was curiously bound to practices of cultural consumption. With this awareness, I would proudly display my knowledge of and taste for things Cuban (particularly song, music, and film), and this was as important for defining myself politically to others as it was marching or reading Frankfurt School texts. In this dissertation I applied this awareness and investigated how others viewed Cuban films. Some of these others were Cuban cultural workers participating in official cultural institutions. The other set of others was composed of writers in the United States publishing in intellectual media of mostly liberal and leftist leanings. The hypothesis was that these sets of institutionally bound reviewers would, like I did, display their political identities through the process of film viewing and, more specifically, interpreting Cuban film. Since the beginning of the project I assumed that given the national and social differences of my case studies, the display of politics would be different. Moreover, I assumed that the potential difference would tell me something about the convergence of film interpretation, identity, and politics in each nation.

In this chapter I conclude the investigation and do it by way of elaborating on three things. First, I quickly summarize the contents and findings of the previous

chapters, giving special attention to the two case studies. Second, I compare both sets of findings and analyze their implications for understanding how technologies of self can be used to explain politicized film interpretation. Third, I place my research within the wider frame of reference of international film and media studies and end this dissertation reviewing its theoretical and methodological implications.

Review of research

This dissertation dealt with the ways political identities, in particular Cuban leftist and U.S. liberal and feminist identities, are expressed and enacted through public film interpretation. Though centered on film reception, this topic originated in questions of identity[1]: it came about when I observed that many intellectuals who wrote on leftism, Marxism, and/or feminism engaged in prolonged definitions and debates regarding what personal characteristics constituted, or should constitute, a good feminist and/or a good leftist. Having read some of the literature on Cuban film and culture, as well as Marxist aesthetics and French and U.S. feminism, I pondered upon whether these debates on normative identities in what I consider progressive communities included prescriptions for film viewing and how these prescriptions were carried out (or not) by members of the communities. Moreover, I wanted to write about these apparently prescriptive tendencies in a way that would respect the progressive character of the communities.

With this in mind, I hypothesized that some viewers with strong political identities utilized film viewing, film interpretation, and film evaluation to craft their

identities in order to fit contingent definitions of being political.[2] In particular, I argued that, given that social revolutions call attention to self-formation and transformation, members of (at least some) highly politicized communities respond to this emphasis on acting on the self by embracing technologies of self. These technologies, which according to Michel Foucault help individuals effect on their own selves changes to match idealized versions of personhood, are socially constructed ways of being, in this case, of being political.

Since belonging to leftist and feminist communities often means existing in agonistic locations where hegemonic fissures are revealed through cultural struggles, film reception cannot be explained by way of hegemonic viewing practices. In some cases more is at stake in film viewing than simply entertainment, and our theoretical and methodological approaches should reflect this. I have argued that using technologies of self to investigate politicized reception is a necessary addition to film reception theory, particularly if we are to recognize how individuals exercise contingent agency in spectatorship. Following cultural studies approaches to film, I attempted to further our understanding of how political audiences enact freedom in media consumption and film reception. To account for freedom, I appeal to its contingency and qualify it as a historically determined disposition to see oneself as a social agent. Regardless of its diminished power, its anti-humanized definition, freedom with a small "f" continues at the center of explanations of politicized identities since it helps us understand the meanings that some social practices have to the practitioners. When

social agents perceive themselves as existing in agonistic locations but are also socialized to see themselves as agents of change, social practices, such as film interpretation, become, or may become, practices of freedom. Moreover, these practices may be part of a larger set of actions geared toward the crafting of the individuals' political, public self, a technology of self.

To investigate these theoretical issues I chose two very different case studies, based in different historical and national contexts, but with somehow similar political characteristics. For the first, official reviewers of post-revolutionary Cuban film working for Cuban cultural institutions, I examined how a revolutionary socialist context produced the conditions for the use of cultural interpretation as part of a technology of public selfhood. In the second, liberal, leftist, and feminist reviewers working in U.S. media, I attempted to examine how politicized radical identities located in a capitalist context used cultural interpretations as political actions and with political meanings. The following sections quickly review the findings of each case and their more theoretical implications and compare both cases.

Culture and Reception in Cuba and the United States

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the historical framework of this dissertation, Cuba had roughly ten million people and the United States around two hundred and fifty million. Cuba was organized politically and economically as a socialist nation with a centralized planned economy, a single leader, and a single official political party, the

Cuban Communist Party (PCC). The United States, a symbol of capitalism, was also a symbol of democracy, with more than two centuries of having a bipartisan electoral system of government. Cuba's underdeveloped status and its Latin and African ancestry opposed the U.S.'s developed Anglo-Saxon self-image. The list of differences between the nations could go on, and the obvious question is: if comparing assumes similarities, given that the differences between these nations are so stark, how can I compare them? This question is particularly relevant to social and cultural comparisons, because most social and cultural theories are built on the basic assumption that social, economic, historical, cultural, and political contexts determine societal phenomena.[3] "Class," for instance, a basic unit of analysis for capitalist societies does not "officially" exist in Cuba. Private ownership and capital, two key elements of Marxist theories of reification, ideology, and hegemony (to mention three key concepts), are also practically absent from the Cuban context. (That said, I find the concepts of ideology and hegemony applicable to the Cuban context in the way they help me illustrate the structuring of power; however, I understand that I need to study further this issue.) It should be quite obvious that even the most basic notions of stratification in these nations may very well be incomparable.

Yet, this study was built on the theoretical and methodological assumption that comparisons were not only possible but even reasonable. After all, both were nation-states partly defined by discourses of nation and citizenship. Both were societies that used culture to exercise social and political control. Leftist, Marxist, and feminist

identities and communities, though differently expressed, existed in both nations. Finally, both nations had strong discourses that linked culture, including film, to identity and to ethics. All of these factors made comparisons reasonable, but as the chapters showed, my work had to acknowledge the differences as well as the similarities and had to do so using theoretical tools that could be applied to both settings.

Given that most Marxist theories of society are built on the assumption that processes of production are the key determinants in social and subjective life, I had to rely on different social theories. The works of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens offered useful ways of talking about Cuban and American societies and cultures. Because concepts such as the *habitus* and social systems rely on non-economic definitions of stratification, they were useful at pointing to differences and similarities between Cuba and the U.S. cultural systems. Moreover, the *habitus* was useful in linking systems of thought and of hermeneutics to institutions. For this, I relied on Bourdieu's notion of cultural field, as a social system that constituted *habitus* based partly on its relation to what Bourdieu calls "the field of power," by which he means the hegemonic political and economic structures.

Moreover, though Bourdieu based his idea of a field of cultural production on the French context, in this study I showed that the American and Cuban cultural worlds are organized around some of the similar principles that include the following: 1) film reception exists within institutionalized contexts; 2) cultural work is often politicized; 3)

hermeneutic frameworks of film reception, interpretation, and commentary are normative; 4) implicit in these frameworks are normative ideas of the self.

1. Film Reception Exists within Institutionalized Contexts

The 1959 Cuban Revolution produced the conditions for the institutionalization of Cuba's field of cultural production, including film. Perceived by the leadership as a necessary tool for securing the support of the population and for transforming the population into a revolutionary social force, culture became increasingly politicized and, typically, in line with the ideological requirements of the government. The close relationship between the field of culture and the field of power, as Bourdieu would call these two social realms, had profound implications for the lives of cultural workers, for it meant, among other things, that their professions (as sets of actions, expectations, and discursive legitimizations) would be often, if not always, shaped by politics. Culture was politicized, and cultural workers became political actors.

The institutionalization of the cultural realm in Cuba included the early organization of the film institute (Instituto Cubano de Artes e Industria Cinematográficos, ICAIC), cultural magazines, journals, artist's and writer's unions, and cultural training centers. Though not always consistently, these organizations tended to abide by official cultural policies that offered a centralized view of the role culture should play in society and the way it should be produced, sponsored, and supported by the also centralized resources of The State.

Unlike in Cuba, where cultural policy had largely normalized a growing cultural field through a process of state institutionalization, the American cultural field had been basically unregulated (though specific industries like film and television had been self-regulated), decentralized (though Hollywood and New York City have historically constituted two strong cultural poles), heterogeneous (the systemic distance between high art and popular culture is significant), capitalist, and ambiguous in relation to the field of power. All of these factors complicate the understanding of any given section of the field at any given time.

However, the contingent conditions of reception surrounding Cuban film in the United States allowed me to section off an area of the cultural field characterized by modes of exhibition, critical expectations, and some of the audiences' (including critics') ideological, cultural, and political leanings. Cuban film has been exhibited mostly through art houses and film festivals. This has meant that it has shared a cultural space with art-cinema from Europe, political film from Third Cinema traditions, cult and classic films, and, lately, independent cinema from the United States. Although quite diverse, this cultural space is commonly related to films possessing aesthetic quality and political and/or ideological complexity. Given these assumed textual characteristics, the space invites educated, intellectual, urban, and cosmopolitan viewers and critics.

The second way in which I sectioned the American cultural field was by concentrating on liberal, leftist, and feminist criticism. As I mentioned in Chapter 6, an

educational revolution that began in the 1950s changed intellectual life in the United States. Chiefly, it gave a space to typically disenfranchised peoples and knowledges, something that transformed the academic practices of criticism and film theory. As Chapter 7 shows, as the 1970s progressed, it became increasingly common to find relatively mainstream criticism that used hermeneutic techniques typically associated with feminist and Marxist criticism.

2. Cultural Work Is often Politicized

Cultural forms, or at least some cultural expressions, are considered political in most societies. In Cuba, however, the closeness between fields (culture and power) and their ideological alignment made politicization different from the ways it has occurred in most capitalist, Western societies. Take for instance France where, as Bourdieu noted, the field of culture and the field of power are certainly interlinked but function on an assumption of relative independence.[4] This notion is particularly important to the cultural field. To support this assumption, the field relies on aesthetic theories and conceptions of freedom and individuality that give an ethical, epistemological, and experiential validity to its dominated status. The field is thus dependent but this reality is sublimated.

The trade-off for being dependent on the field of power is the social acquisition of "distinction," a characteristic that favorably distinguishes those who participate in the cultural field and that has been commonly associated in France, as in the United States, with moral, intellectual, and spiritual superiority. The cultural field's appearance of

independence is constituted through the circulation and canonization of common aesthetic "theories" such as the idea that art is its own goal ("art for art's sake") or that the proper way of engaging art is through disinterested contemplation. These and other tactics preserve the aura of independence, while granting art (and other high-brow cultural forms) an anti-hegemonic patina.

Since in Cuba many cultural workers and government officials openly recognized this interdependence of culture and power (see Chapter 3), the field of cultural production had to rely on different legitimating tactics. The value of cultural work and cultural production could not depend only on granting those involved in it a certain intellectual and "spiritual" distinction (though Cubans often expressed their value judgments based on the "greatness" of the work or of the cultural worker). Seeing as politics came to constitute the field's boundary (Fidel Castro's famous dictum illustrates this point: "Within the revolution, anything; against the revolution, nothing"), this distinction would have to come, at least partly, from culture's political role, which had been outlined in Cuba's Cultural Policies. The kernel of these policies—that art, including film, should educate the new citizenry—gave the cultural realm a social value and distinctive political function. It also provided rationales that could explain the dependent relationship culture had with power. These rationales were developed overtime and took the form of aesthetic theories that recognized the ideological nature of culture and that rejected the idealist bases of Western formalism.

The politicization of the U.S. reception of Cuban films followed different paths. The period covered in my investigation roughly spans from 1972 to 1985. During this time, the discursive remnants or dispersions of the 1960s political struggles still politicized significant areas of the cultural field. The Civil Rights, anti-war and counter-cultural movements and, later, the Women's and gay movements normalized the display of political identities and the political interpretation of film in an ideologically diverse media system.

This normalization was particularly true regarding films coming from Cuba, a nation that since the 1950s was represented in U.S. media in quite political terms. In the 1950s, few but popular representations of the Cuban revolutionary army in literature, print, and media provided a romantic aura to Cuba's political struggle and a heroic tint to Castro. During the 1960s, the military and political animosity of both nations and mainstream "anti-authoritarianism" gave a Cold War hue to most representations of Cuba in the United States. As my research showed, anti-authoritarianism continued influencing some of the reception of Cuban films in the 1970s (Chapter 7).

Other factors that shaped the political interpretation of the Cuban films had to do with the ambiguous relation the American cultural field had with the field of power. Supporting Bourdieu's idea that the cultural field relies on the assumption of independence, some reviewers used the anti-Cuban U.S. State Department's actions to assert their opposition to the field of power. Particularly when reviewing *Lucia* and *Memories*, critics placed a wedge between themselves and the government by implying

that the government's cultural embargo on Cuba had become the basis for censorship-like activities. Those government actions resulted in a threat to cultural freedoms, an idea central to the field of culture, as central to the mediated American cultural field as the idea of "art for art's sake" among the highbrow elite. But just as disinterestedness was a way of constituting a field of distinction invested in the reproduction of established power hierarchies, critics defending expression did so from positions of gender, class, cultural, ethnic, and racial privilege. In addition, these critics recreated a cultural space where the consumption of foreign film was a social activity that granted cultural and intellectual distinction and that likely participated in the stratification of American society.

3. Hermeneutics Guides Film Interpretation

A field of cultural production (and exhibition) is a social system that gives meaning and structure to cultural transactions, but because of the different ways in which the fields of power are structured in Cuba and the United States, each field has constituted a different *habitus*, held together by different rules, practices, discourses, and manifestations of their relations to power. In post-revolutionary Cuba, the field of cultural production had an overt relation of dependence to the field of power, and, accordingly, the *habitus* structured dispositions that aided the reconstitution of the field of power. The cultural field, including the cinema world, engendered these dispositions by very narrowly defining culture. As a whole, the field of culture in Cuba followed Castro's request in "Palabras a los Intellectuales" of discovering that which is "noble,

useful, and beautiful." Seeking nobility in cultural production gave the field an ethical character, a type of socialist "distinction" that cultural workers could make a reality only if they embodied nobility, only if they embodied the Revolution. Understanding cultural work as useful gave the field a functionalist epistemology and aesthetics in which truth, reality, and artistry depended on whether they facilitated the coming of socialism and/or communism. An ethos of function dominated the *habitus* and set dispositions for evaluating work based on the work's prospective usefulness to broad social/political goals. Cultural policing abided by the same dispositions. In this *habitus*, as in all, aesthetics became subject to politics, and useful, noble work was deemed beautiful. Beauty was as beauty did.

Roughly speaking, these aesthetic ideas, discussed in Chapter 4 and referred to as a "revolutionary hermeneutics," included the following: culture is political; culture can and should transform the film viewer into a better political being and a better citizen; cultural workers are political workers and belong, or should belong, to the vanguard of society; cultural work should be produced with Marxist aesthetic principles, which recognize the transformational power of art and its ideological underpinnings; cultural work should deal with themes that can further cultural policy, that could educate, transform, and produce *conciencia* in the Cuban people; *conciencia* would have to be developed in order to become the New Man, which in the Cuban context meant a citizen suited to take Cuba from its underdeveloped and capitalist background to an egalitarian communist society; finally, because the field was so important to the political

sustainability of the Revolution, it would have to be policed by members of the field (e.g., critics) and by the field of power.

The American *habitus* also included normative ideas of interpretation. In Chapter 6, I suggested that some reviewers used anti-totalitarian discourses to interpret things Cuban. Evidence in Chapter 7 partly corroborated this suggestion. In Chapter 7 I showed that most liberal, leftist, and feminist writers did not use overt anti-communism to interpret these film. Instead, they used the discourse of anti-totalitarianism; this was manifested by multiple references to cultural freedoms and propaganda in Cuba.

In addition, I also argued that the Cuban films were seen through the prisms of leftist and feminist politics and that these prisms were hermeneutical in nature. When applied to specific films, these interpretive tactics helped highlight issues of class oppression, history, gender oppression, and the ideological character of filmmaking. Moreover, these tactics also led critics to use extra-textual information to complement or shape the meaning of the text, giving weight to what the critic knew about the contexts of production: the Cuban fields of culture and power.

The *habitus* also structures the way an individual makes sense of herself/himself as member of a community, nation, and/or society. In the case of American critics, this was shown in the ways in which reviews hit double registers that at once claimed independence from and subjection to the field of power. Some reviewers asserted their independence from power by criticizing governmental actions (for instance when reviewers framed *Lucia* and *Memories* in relation to the U.S. State Department's actions

against the first Cuban Film Festival) or hegemonic ideologies (as when reviewers of *Portrait of Teresa* and *Up to a Certain Point* complained about the lack of "women's films" in Hollywood). Reviewers showed their subjection to the field of power and to overarching ideologies of domination by reference to hegemonic discourses (such as the discourse of cinematic quality brought up in relation to *One Way or Another*), gender discourses (like the ones used by reviewers of *Portrait of Teresa*, who used genre to criticize it), and political discourses that implied that the Cuban cultural system reflected Cuba's single party system.

That reviewers performed their identities through this dual register suggests the American reception of these Cuban films often relied on a hermeneutics of ambivalence. Moreover, it also suggests that this hermeneutics of ambivalence re-enacted, at the level of the subject and the self, the dual position the cultural field has in relation to the field of power. Using anti-authoritarian rhetoric, many reviewers reconstituted the idea that their own cultural field was and should be independent from the field of power but did it ideologically echoing some of the U.S. government's claims about Cuba and the Cuban system of freedoms.

4. Normative Ideas of Self Are Part of Hermeneutics

The revolutionary hermeneutics found in official Cuban writings and the hermeneutics of ambivalence found in American reviews are two textual tactics partly constructed on different discourses of self. The Cuban institutional contexts provided

the opportunity for the application of non-liberal theories of selfhood while the U.S. cultural field relied on liberal theories of the self.

The *habitus*, Bourdieu theorized, marks the lifestyle of a community and is thus key to understanding identity. It normalizes practices and discourses and provides the tools for self-understanding as well as for understanding subjection and freedom. Members of cultural fields, as I have shown, use the discourse of aesthetics to negotiate self-understanding. This is so because aesthetics provides tools for comprehending, evaluating, and interpreting work. Given that cultural fields are always in flux, and that members are in constant struggles over position, aesthetics can become a most useful tool for self-definition, advancement, and, when needed, for defending a position in the system.

In the case of Cuba, I have shown how aesthetic discourses were used to displace people from the field, to censure, to praise, to explain the nature of good (socially valuable) cultural work and, thus, the proper definition of the cultural worker. Moreover, I argued that functioning in cultural institutions meant, among other things, learning to interpret cultural work using at least some elements of the revolutionary hermeneutics and aesthetics. Chapter 5 shows the application of such interpretive techniques. Though methods of interpretation varied depending on the cultural worker and on the film being reviewed, writings consistently measured the text against its social value; this is evidence of how important it was to perform publicly civically responsible work. These displays of selfhood fitted the official discourse of the

intellectual and the cultural vanguard and suggest that cultural workers existed in institutions and communities where technologies of public selfhood circulated as attractive options to better answer the call of culture and the call of power.

The revolutionary hermeneutics and aesthetics provide a counterpoint to Western "avant garde" aesthetics and to liberal theories of the individual. That is, in most Western societies, the artist who abides by the rule of "art for art's sake" is often an archetype of freedom and individuality, a maverick, an explorer of the unruly territories of abstractionism, of the personal and social unconscious, of non-art, or of the unthinkable. Thought of in this way, the artist is, together with the intellectual and the (honest) politician, a liberal archetype for whom liberal freedoms are constructed. Indeed, the artist's value as human archetype is one of the key discourses that support the idea of "freedom of expression," of action, and of belief. Yet, as Bourdieu and several Cuban cultural workers have observed, these ideas about artists and art are ideological and support already established hegemonic structures.

That Cubans often challenged liberal ideas of self and freedom (at least within cultural institutions) meant that a different idea of the self would have to come to prominence. This idea of self, I argued, was modeled after the New Man, which was and is an archetype of the socialist self. To pursue the goal of becoming a New Man, Cuban cultural workers often used Marxist aesthetics and the revolutionary hermeneutics. With these tools, cultural workers were able to perform their work in a socially responsible way and did so while making themselves more in the image of the

New Man. Practicing their professions in this way was (defined as) a liberatory practice, for it challenged the capitalist and liberal past and for it placed the social over the private good. More importantly, practicing their professions in this way meant subjecting themselves to ethical self-evaluation and modeling. “To be like Che” (a common slogan in Cuba) was something that could be achieved only through the disciplining of the self. Interpreting filmic works in ways that showed this disciplining was one way of abiding by ethical standards and a way of applying a technology of self to cultural work.

That Cubans issued sometimes timely criticism of Western aesthetics and ideas of the self does not mean that Cuban aesthetics and cultural practices were always progressive or socially responsible. As I have commented since Chapter 1, things are more complex. The advent of a new hegemonic structure in Cuba, a new economic system and political establishment, benefited from this functional aesthetics and from the redefinition of core social concepts such as freedom and individuality. As I showed in Chapter 3, in official cultural publications, freedom was weighed against the standard of civic duty and social responsibility. These last two concepts also became central requirements for acquiring full citizenship and became arguments used against cultural work and workers. As seen in the case of *P.M.,* Heberto Padilla, Reynaldo Arenas, and other cultural workers suffered censorship and cultural and legal repression; this can be seen as the ironic result of the application of otherwise progressive Marxist aesthetics.

Contrary to the closeness between official culture and power found in Cuba, the *habitus* of the American cultural workers manifested a discursive ambivalence toward the field of power, an ambivalence that resembled the agonistic relation between cultural systems and political structures. Cultural fields, as commented in Chapter 2, are social systems in a position of subordination in relation to power. However, their cogency depends, Bourdieu argues, on being able to sustain the belief of independence from power. This was apparent in my findings.

The idea of independence is supported through different discursive means depending on specific cultural locations. "Entertainment," for instance, is commonly thought of as a discursive and symbolic cultural realm quite apart from politics. It is "apolitical," an idea that cultural studies has exposed as faulty. Regarding the location explored in this dissertation, ideas such as "freedom of expression" re-enact the distance between culture and power. In addition to this reenactment, ideas regarding taste, aesthetics, narrative competence (which included being able to use Marxist and feminist criticism to interpret and evaluate the films), and auteuristic knowledge (which reviewers used to "contextualize" the films and, typically, to compare them to European art-film) legitimated the "quality" of each film in reference to non-economic terms, something that separated these reviewers and films from the field of power (at the other end of the cultural spectrum is "film as entertainment" where box-office success function as one key marker of quality). As important, being able to "objectify" hegemonic ideologies, such as patriarchy and capitalism, and being able to use extra-

textual knowledge to interpret the films, something found in many of the reviews, meant also demarcating the boundary between a cultural location and the field of power.

Yet, insofar as these discursive and interpretive practices draw the separation between power and culture based on practices that give "distinction" to the reviewer, they simultaneously reconstitute certain aspects of hegemony and thus participate in subjection. Speaking against power, as Stanley Kauffmann, Marjorie Rosen, and Julianne Burton did, required power, the power gained by belonging to institutions, being educated, and having a political identity.

Based on my observations in Chapter 7, I found it hard to make a strong case for technologies of self in the set of American cultural workers that I investigated. Political aims varied as did interpretive techniques. However, I can venture that because of the ambivalence just discussed, political self-construction was a more precarious process in America than it was in official Cuba. Though feminism and leftism have historically provided a *habitus* for technologies of self, little evidence of political "disciplining" occurred in mainstream reviews. That said, more specialized reviewers did interpret films based on strong political identities and did so using some of the Marxist and feminist hermeneutics reviewed in Chapter 6. I believe that further research on the way these cultural locations are constituted will show that film interpretation is indeed part of technologies of selfhood, particularly in highly politicized cultural workers such as those who belong to academic circles.

Implications for the Field

In this project I investigated the ways in which different styles of being political were manifested in film viewing and interpretation. My approach to the study attempted to supplement film reception studies by adding concerns of the self and self-formation to those already in use. This approach has theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary implications beyond film reception. Theoretically, my research establishes the importance of accounting for the self, not only for subjects and subjection. Approaching research in this manner means accounting for the determining power of structures *and* for the way social practices are expressions of contingent freedoms. In film reception theory, this means trying to understand the individual's role in shaping interpretation and modes of reception.

Methodologically, my theoretical observations imply that discursive evidence may be used to show how subjection and contingent freedoms are manifested in film interpretation and commentary. Moreover, and something that requires future research, this implies that all discursive evidence should be treated in this dual way. Though some cultural studies approaches have only recognized evidence of agency in practices overtly resistive (or at least oppositional to hegemony), this negates the poststructuralist lesson that structures are always changing through action. Thus, all actions are structuring actions. Assuming that agency is manifested only through the opposition to social structures runs the risk of implying that true emancipation is possible. As Ernesto Laclau argued, emancipation is as impossible as it is impossible to objectify hegemony.

It is within hegemony that subjects conceive of freedom and within hegemony that they enact it.[5]

In regard to media and film studies, my research tries to complement approaches to international media and international film studies that have, too often, centered on political economy issues and only rarely on audiences across nations. Though limited in scope, as any research is, this dissertation offers a way of looking at two sets of audiences connected, even if briefly, by a common mediation. Conversely, film research in America, particularly that following a cultural studies approach, has almost exclusively dealt with national issues. This dissertation is an attempt at using film reception theory to explain viewership at the international level, comparing viewership in two nations.

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[1] In this project, I used "film reception" in a narrow sense. See chap. 1, n. 3.

[2] To understand the way I use viewing and film viewing in this project, see chap. 1, n. 3.

[3] To review a commendable set of comparative strategies, assumptions, and methods, see Mattei Dogan and Dominique Pelassy, *How to Compare Nations: Strategies in Comparative Politics* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, Inc., 1990).

[4] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," in *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 39.

[5] Ernesto Laclau. *Emancipation(s)* (New York: Verso, 1996): 1-5.

Appendix

Film Summaries

Memories

Memories del Subdesarrollo (*Memories of Underdevelopment*), 1968. Director: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1968. Script: Edmundo Desnoes and Alea. Protagonists: Sergio Corrieri (Sergio), Daisy Granados (Elena).

The story happens in La Havana in 1961, at a time when the nation was undergoing profound changes and just before the Missile Crisis. Sergio, an educated, middle class, thirty-something white man has seen his family and friends leave Cuba. Left behind, almost alone (except for his friend Pablo who continuously criticizes the social change the Revolution is bringing), Sergio walks through the city observing with melancholic interest and, at times, with disdain the altering force of the new order. Through inner-monologues, the viewer learns of Sergio feelings of exceptionalism based on his class, cultural make-up, gender, sex, and race. The people he observes are, according to him, vulgar, underdeveloped, unattractive, irrational beings, opinions that produce an alienating feeling. As the observer, he is in a position of defining a Cuba that he cannot yet leave.

He establishes a relationship with a very young woman, Elena, whose social extraction he finds unappealing but other physical attributes allowing to forget that. He seduces her and in the process tries to “develop” her intellect, he feels, to no avail. He

takes her to the Ernst Hemingway's house, to museums, and bookstores, to bed. When things go sour, Elena's family confront Sergio and accuse him to the authorities of rape. Though the ruling is in Sergio's favor, his feelings of alienation increase. In the final scene he is alone in his luxury condominium, looking at La Havana getting ready for a possible U.S. invasion during the Missile Crisis.

As a counterpoint to the fictional narration, the narrative weaves in non-fictional footage of historical and/or symbolic importance. We see Marily Monroe, U.S. soldiers at Guantanamo Bay, blacks beaten by soldiers, Fidel Castro's speeches, and the trial of individuals who had participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Lucia

Lucia (*Lucía*), 1968. Director: Humberto Solás. Script: Julio García Espinosa and Nelson Rodriguez. Protagonists: Raquel Revuleta (Lucia I), Eslinda Núñez (Lucia II), Adela Legrá (Lucia III), Eduardo Moure (Rafael), Ramón Brito (Aldo), Adolfo Llauradó (Tomás).

"Lucia 1895" narrates the story of a wealthy, single, white, sexually conservative Cuban woman in 1895, at a time when Cubans were engaged in a war for independence from Spain. Lucía is interested in marrying and she is happy when an Spanish man, Rafael, begins to court her. Though Lucía's allegiances are with the indepence fighters, that include her brother, she pursues her relationship with Rafael. He, laying about his romantic intentions, tricks her into giving him the location of some of the revolutionary

forces. Promptly, the Spanish attack the hide-out killing Lucía's brother and many others. Lucía goes mad and kills Rafael with a knife.

"Lucia 1932" is the story of a middle class, white, conservative Cuban young woman in 1932, at time in Cuban history when insurgent forces are attempting to put an end to the ruling of President Machado. Lucía becomes involved with Aldo, a radical member of the insurgency. Abandoning her roots, she takes off with Aldo, sharing danger, poverty, and idealism. They marry just before the insurgency forces triumph. Aldo becomes part of the new government, but, confronted with the slowness of change, he goes radical only to be killed. Lucía, then pregnant, is left isolated from her class and alone.

"Lucia 196…" narrates the story of a poor, mulatto, uneducated, woman from rural Cuba during the early revolutionary years. A newlywed to Tomás, she soon discovers the new husband's jealousy and its consequences. Tomás is intent in isolating her, forbidding her to work, interact with others outside the home, and from benefiting from the now-famous revolutionary government's alphabetization campaign of 1962. Her struggles against Tomás's narrow-mindedness are helped by Tomás's coworkers who try to pressure him into stopping his brutish behavior. Unable to succeed, Lucía leaves him which causes Tomás to go into emotional despair. Eventually, he recognizes that loosing Lucía is more catastrophic to his life than holding on to atavistic ideas regarding gender and sexuality. In the final scene, Lucía and Tomás struggle for a compromise, but the film ends before one can be reached.

One Way or Another

De Cierta Manera (*One Way or Another*), 1977. Director: Sara Gómez. Script: Gómez, Alea, García. Protagonists: Mario Balsameda (Mario), Yolanda Cuellar (Yolanda).

It is a film that extensively mixes a fictional narrative with documentary footage and the lives of real Cubans. The fictional narrative, which develops at the beginning of the Revolution, tells the story of Mario and Yolanda as they become romantically involved. Mario, a mulatto from Havana's poor shanty-towns, faces some challenges at work because of his relationship to Humberto (Mario Limonta), who has asked Mario to lie on his behalf so that he can justify a lengthy work absence. Humberto is having an affair with a woman who lives in another city. Mario is divided between his responsibilities as a friend and his civic duties. Yolanda, a middle-class school-teacher, is also in a process of learning. She teaches at a school attended by poor and at times undisciplined children and she must learn to deal with her students difficult lives if she is to become a good teacher and she must also learn to take criticism if she is to become a good revolutionary teacher. Yolanda and Mario struggle with their values. Mario, supported by Yolanda, decides to act ethically and accuses Humberto of taking advantage of the system. Yolanda struggles more to change her values. The ending shows the couple discussing in the middle of a newly-constructed housing project.

The fictional narrative is mixed with documentary footage about Abakuá religion, an AfroCuban spiritual tradition exclusive for men; footage depicting the demolition of

a shanty town in Havana; and interviews with a Cuban fighter who became a song-writer.

Portrait of Teresa

Retrato de Teresa (*Portrait of Teresa*), 1979. Director: Pastor Vega. Script: Vega, Ambrosio Fornet. Protagonists: Granados (Teresa), Llauradó (Ramón).

It narrates the story of Teresa, a textile worker and mother of three whose political and work commitments, evinced on her responsibilities at work and her after-work activities, produce a rift between her and her husband Ramón. He becomes increasingly resentful at Teresa's after-hours engagements that include leading a dance-troupe organized by the union. Arguing that she is not fulfilling her roles a wife and mother, Ramón convinces Teresa to take a leave of absence from work. Pressured by the union leaders, who argue Teresa's skills as leader are required for the dance-troupe to succeed at a national level, Teresa returns to her work and after-work duties. Ramon, unhappy about this turn of events, leaves Teresa, goes back to leaving with his mother, and takes a young lover. Her efforts pay-off. The dance-troupe wins a national competition and she and Tomás, the co-leader of the troupe, are interviewed in television. Ramon, fearing Teresa's relationship with Tomás is more than professional, requests a meeting of reconciliation with her. At this meeting Ramón is confronted by Teresa. He claims his extra-marital relationship is over. She challenges him to give her reasons why she should forgive him and, as argument, she points out that Ramón would never forgive

her had she had an affair. He, agreeing, claims that the reason is that it is not the same for men than for women. The film ends with Teresa walking away from Ramón.

Up to a Certain Point

Hasta Cierto Punto (*Up to a Certain Point*), 1983. Director: Alea. Script: Alea and Serafín Quiñonez. Protagonists: Oscar Álvarez (Oscar), Mirta Ibarra (), Omar Valdéz (Arturo).

This is a story about Oscar, a successful scriptwriter, who is helping Arturo, a filmmaker and friend, with a documentary project about machismo in postrevolutionary Cuba. The documentary is set at the docks, where Oscar meets Lina, a dockworker with the credentials to be the center of the story. What began as research, becomes a romantic liaison between Lina and Oscar, who pursues Lina in spite of being married. When Oscar's behavior becomes public, it produces an estrangement between the workers and Arturo: they are no longer interested in discussing machismo and instead discuss technical, economic, and administrative difficulties they face at the docks. The relationship between Oscar and Lina ends when she leaves Havana to start a new life in the East of Cuba.

The narrative mixes documentary footage and interviews with real dock workers.

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